

HERITAGE OF THE LORD:
YOUTH MINISTRY WITHIN A CHRIST APOSTOLIC CHURCH IN THE
DIASPORA

By

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ABSTRACT
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The problem was the rapid and increasing loss of the young people—second-generation immigrants, from their parents’ churches in the Diaspora. I became aware of this during my eleven years of being an associate pastor in a prominent immigrant church in Brooklyn, New York. The purpose of this study was to define and explain the struggle of Christ Apostolic Church to retain young people for the Church of tomorrow. The purpose also was to translate the result of the research into a meaningful training manual to be used to educate pastors and be used to teach the young people of the church. The principles of this manual are expected to have great impact upon the beliefs and the attitude of the young people towards their parents’ churches.

As a first generation immigrant pastor, I feel it is important to reach out to the other immigrant pastors, churches and their young people; to educate them about the CAC “perspectives” on rapid disappearance of the second-generation immigrant young fellows from their parents’ churches; and then suggest steps to take to retain these young people in the church. Invitations were sent out twice to twenty-eight immigrant churches, to attend youth/adult interactive seminars. Workshops were held separately for the young and the adult members of the church. In all, about 192 young people and about 65 adults attended the workshops.

The response of the young people was very remarkable; they saw the workshops as thought-provoking media, where they were able to air their grievances and make

valuable suggestions on how to enhance attendance of young people in their parents' churches.

While this study was focused on CAC, the problems, the findings and the results have relevance to all churches.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my family—my wife and children, who dearly supported my wish/strife to do this project and with unalloyed love, they put up with every sociological, financial and psychological stress that the course of this work have caused them. Gradually, after I turned our dining room into a bookshop and our dining table into a bookshelf and a reading table, yet they journeyed down the pathway with me with their unflinching support and love.

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INTRODUCTION

Christ Apostolic Church (First in the Americas)

Christ Apostolic Church first in the Americas is located at 622 Cortelyou Road in Brooklyn, New York. Founded in 1976 by Dr. Abraham A. Oyedeji, the church presently has a membership of about 600 with the average Sunday attendance of a little over 400. My church is a charismatic/Pentecostal church that is characterized by aspects of African culture and traditions. Situated between East 7th street and Ocean Parkway, the church building is a monumental edifice. This church is rooted from and connected to her mother church in the Yoruba region of Nigeria. Christ Apostolic church is a fundamentally distinctive African indigenous church (AIC). My church was the first CAC branch to be established in North America as indicated by Alokun that “Elder A.A. Oyedeji is regarded in many quarters as the founder of the CAC in the Americas.”¹

Apart from its strong belief in the efficacy of prayer, some of the CAC’s fundamental beliefs are: strong respect for the Bible as the inspired word of God, the basic foundational structure upon which their theology and belief strongly rested and the content of which is infallible divine revelation. Other beliefs of CAC include but are not limited to Baptism by immersion, the Trinity and the Unity of God-Head, The Divine Healing power of sanctified water. (See the tenets of CAC for details of other beliefs of CAC). My church, though located in the United States, adheres strongly to the doctrines

¹ Adewale Alokun, *The Christ Apostolic Church 1928–1988* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibukun Ola Press, 1991), 256.

of her mother church in Nigeria, a doctrine that is strongly rooted into and directly derived from “the Holy Scriptures, the touching and soul-inspiring sermons and messages of its founding fathers”². The following are the thirteen Tenets of CAC, practice by my church with tenacity of purpose.

The Tenets Of The Christ Apostolic Church

1. **Like other Christian churches, my church believes in the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.** The church accepts God the Father as the Omnipotent, the Supreme Being that created the heaven and the earth and that Jesus Christ is His only begotten son, who was incarnated and came to be born of flesh, an affirmation of the Gospel of John. (John. 1)³
2. **The Utter depravity of human nature; the necessity for Repentance and Regeneration and the Eternal Doom of the finally impenitent.** My church believes the creation’s story that humankind was created in God’s own image (Gen.1 and 2). That humankind fell because of their disobedience to God’s commandments. That God expressed an unparalleled love and kindness to mankind through the arrival of God’s only begotten Son—Jesus Christ on Earth, who came to reconcile man to God and save the world (John.3:16). In the same belief of her mother church in Nigeria, my church strongly believes and accepts the fact that no sinner would qualify for life eternal and that there is no punishment without sin. Therefore, it is a general belief in my church today that

² Alokun, *The Christ Apostolic Church*, 256.

³ All biblical quotes, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Holy Bible*, The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, King James Version (Indianapolis: B.B. Kirkbridge Bible Co Inc, 1988).

“if there is no sin, there should be no punishment.” Hence if any of her members is in a troubling situation he/she is always advised to examine himself to discover if he/she has committed any sin. Thereafter, he (she) would be relieved of his problem through prayers offered in faith⁴.

3. **The Virgin Birth, Sinless Life, Atoning Death, Triumphant Resurrection, Ascension and abiding Intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ; His second coming and Millennial Reign on earth.** It will amount to an understatement to say that my church strongly believes in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ righteousness and His just life. His death on the cross for the atonement of human’s sins, His resurrection on the third day, and His ascension into Heaven where He continually continues to plead for the sins of humankind (1John.2:1-3). My church believes in the triumphant second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth when he is coming to judge the world. When the righteous will rise with him in the “marriage of the Lamb.”(Roman.3:21-23). An event that will take place for three and half years, thereafter, Jesus Christ will rule over the earth for one thousand years—the millennial Rule of Jesus Christ that will be the prelude to eternity with God.
4. **Justification and sanctification of the believers through the finished work of Christ.** My church tenaciously holds on to the Biblical teaching of Rom. 3: 23 that says “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” It is therefore

⁴ Alokam, 287.

the general belief of the church that the justification of a person who has sinned against God does not depend on how steadfast or obedient such person is in his /her services to God. This is because irrespective of our services or good work to God we are yet like filthy rags by ourselves alone. “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away”(Isaiah.64:6).

But the Biblical teaching, held clearly by the CAC, is that the justification of a person who had committed a sin before God does not depend on the proof of his innocence. Nor does it depend on how punctilious he keeps God’s Laws; nor the amount of his good works. It depends only on his belief in, and the acceptance of Jesus Christ, the Son of God as his Lord and Savior⁵

Although my church advocates that all believers should do good works, however, her belief, in relation to justification and sanctification essentially is to prove that believers’ good works alone are not enough to sanctify them but their belief and trust in the name and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. **The baptism of the Holy Spirit for believers.** My church like most Yoruba indigenous Aladura churches is different from the older churches in her belief in the regular out-pouring of spirit, together with the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues (*glosollalia*), gifts of dreaming, gifts of prophesying and gifts of seeing vision. In the context of all these spiritual paradigms, my church like her parent church, always seeks for spiritual guidance and spiritual directive in every of her undertaking and endeavours. “The early father of the CAC founded it under divine inspiration, directive and guidance. The Holy Spirit always manifests

⁵ Alokun, 288.

herself in the church. This accounts for why others refer to CAC as “Ijo Emi” (a spiritual church).”⁶ In this regard, my church therefore believes that it is mandatory for every member of the church to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The signs to confirm the manifestation of Holy Spirit’s baptism of member(s) could be seen through shaking of the body, speaking in tongues, seeing visions, dreaming or prophesying (Joel.2:28-29).

6. **The Divine Gift of the Holy Spirit for edification, exhortation and comfort of the church, which is the Body of Christ.** In agreement with Apostle Paul’s explanation of nine gifts of Holy Sprit as wisdom knowledge, faith, healing, performing miracle, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, speaking in various tongues and the interpretation of tongues, (1Cor.12:7-11), my church believes in the necessity of every member being blessed with some of these spiritual gifts, as consistent prerequisite to having power over satanic manifestations, sins and every machination of enemies.
7. **The Sacraments of Baptism by Immersion and the Eucharist.** As a first step of being part of Christendom, my church requires every member or every new convert to be baptized by immersion. This belief is rooted in Matt. 28:19-20—the Biblical teaching that mandated every convert who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to be baptized. My church’s acceptance and belief in the Baptism is that by immersion. She believes that to be a *bona fide* member of the church, one should be fully dipped into the water (flowing river or a pool), and be

⁶ Alokun, 289.

baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. CAC does not practice infant baptism, the minimum age limit for baptism in my church is twelve years.

This is to enable them to know the full implication of what baptism stands for. It is believed that the act of baptism implies that the converts being baptized have died and risen with Christ⁷

Baptism by immersion is an important requirement for any member of my church to be a partaker of the Lord's Supper. If a member is a man, he must be a husband of one wife and if she is a woman, she must be the only wife. However, in a society or community where the practice of polygamy is acceptable, the woman must be the first wife while the other co-wives and the polygamist (husband) are unqualified. Only ordained pastors, evangelists and prophets are allowed to perform the baptism rites and administer Lord's Supper in my church.

8. **The Divine Inspiration and Authority of the Holy Scripture.** CAC believes strongly that the Bible—both the Old and the New Testaments—comprised the words of God that were written through the inspiration of Holy Spirit. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-4).

The divine authorship of the Bible is highly recognized by my church and her members. The church recognizes the Bible as a complete Divine book of life, inside

⁷ Alokun, 290.

which are found every spiritual reference necessary for guidance through ones daily living on earth. In every of their daily activities, behaviors and decision making, members of my church are taught to look up to, and into the Bible for spiritual guidance.

9. Church Government by Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers,

Elders and Deacons/Deaconesses. “And he gave some Apostles; and some prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:” (Eph.4: 11-12). The running and the governing of the church in CAC is based on the Apostle order as quoted above from the book of Ephesians.

Hence, the leadership and the managerial order in CAC are hierarchical through the Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Evangelist, Deacons/Deaconesses and the Teachers. The possibility of falling from Grace. My church sided with the school of thought that believes in the possibility of a believer falling off from God’s Grace. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

(1Cor.10:12). However, CAC believes that if such a fallen convert is a true Christian, there is a very good chance/possibility of God bringing him/her back to repentance through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord uphold him with his hand.” (Psalm.37:24).

10. The obligatory nature of Tithes and Offerings. One of the cardinal beliefs of

CAC is the payment of tithes by the members. This belief is based on Mal.3:10-11:

Bring ye all the tithes into the store house, that there may be meat in mine house and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for

your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before time in the field, said the Lord of host.

It is therefore obligatory for all members in my church including the Pastor and the workers to pay their tithes weekly. Tithe contributions are usually dropped in a coffer that is usually placed in a central and front location in the church. Proceeds from Tithes and other offerings such as vows, contribution for the poor, missionary funds and church building funds are used for workers salaries, running and maintenance of the church and support for the church headquarters in Nigeria and other local churches in the Diaspora.

11. Divine Healing through Obedience to command of our Lord Jesus. Christ

and faith in His name and Merit of His blood for all sickness, diseases and infirmities. In CAC, the concept of the Divine Healing coupled with reliance on God for provision of all needs and salvation from sin, are the three pillars of the church's faith. The great revival of 1930 in Nigeria brought among other things, the acceptance and the widespread of the concept of Divine Healing among CAC members. Through this practice, members of the church are forbidden to visit the hospital, if and when they are sick. They were neither allowed to consult physicians nor herbalists for cure or healing from sicknesses, diseases and ailments. In the alternative, they (the sick members) are obliged to engage in fervent prayers and use the sanctified water. This concept of divine healing in CAC was rooted, supported and hinged on the Biblical teachings of Mark 16:17-18 "And these signs will follow those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues. They will take up serpents and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them, they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover." And from James 5:14-15:

Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Although this concept is still very popular in CAC today, however because of several issues like sociological, geographical, generational and philosophical matters, some CAC members—especially those in branches outside Nigeria do go to hospitals and use modern medicine to cure diseases and ailments. The authority of the church today is somehow quiet and indifferent as to whether members adhere to the Doctrine of Divine healing or not.

12. Faith in God, the Jehovah Jireh to supply all financial needs without going into debt or borrowing on interest; and to be content with having food and

raiment. This CAC's article of faith is rooted in the obedience of Abraham to agree to offer his only son Isaac to God. "And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father and said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering..."(Gen.22:7-8). It is therefore a general teaching and belief in my church that once members obey God with unquestionable faith, the Lord will in turn provide all their human (secular) needs. Through the teaching of this tenet comes a general belief in my church that every member that believes in all sufficiency power of God will not go a borrowing neither will such member incur debts. It is therefore a common and general statement to address God as 'The provider of every provision', anytime prayer for special blessings is being said in my church. In lieu of this tenet and belief, my church therefore, forbids her members from participating in money lending with interest ("esusu" or Owo

elele). In the alternative, members are taught to believe God as the controller of the entire universe whose cares and provisions extend to the smallest of His creatures. “He gives the beast their food and does not forget a single sparrow; He feeds his servants with bread and meat through the ravens.”⁸

Home Away From Home

The church experienced several location displacements by way of moving from one place of worship to another, before she finally got to her present location. My church resonates very much with charismatic/Pentecostal models of fellowship, sacrament and prophecy. These beliefs and practices give my church a unique identity that allows her to meet the needs of her Nigerian (especially the Yoruba) immigrants in the United States of America. This uniqueness not only satisfies their spiritual, theological and indigenous worship aspirations, it enormously draws them in large numbers to the church within her two decades of establishment in the United States. Demographically, about 90 percent of my church population are Yoruba—an ethnic group from the western part of Nigeria whose language is Yoruba. About 5 percent are Bendelites and Ibos—an ethnic group that hails from the mid-western and Eastern parts of Nigeria, whose language are Edo and Igbo respectively. The remaining 5 percent are immigrants from the Caribbean and the West Indies. The female population is about 40 percent, men about 30 percent, while the children and young adults are about 30 percent of the church’s general population⁹. The church has one senior pastor—who is also the spiritual father, mentor and advisor to the members. It has two associate pastors (including myself). The associate pastors to some

⁸ Alokun, 294.

⁹ Christ Apostolic Church (First in the Americas) weekly attendance records.

extent supervise the economic, spiritual and the administrative businesses of the church and report directly to the senior pastor—Rev. Dr. A.A. Oyedepi.

Education is highly valued and treasured in the church. About 95 percent of the general population of my church are college graduates who are in different professions, ranging from law, medical profession, information technology, banking and so forth. One hundred percent of the children including the young adults are in school. A majority of the members are middle-income earners while about 90 percent of them are homeowners (some even own 2, 3 or more houses).

It is very interesting to note that almost every member of my church lives outside the church's geographical context. Members commute to the church from Queens, Long Island, Bronx, Staten Island and other parts of Brooklyn. Some members live in New Jersey, while some members commute from Connecticut.

Until seven years ago, my church services and prayer sessions were conducted mostly in Yoruba language but employed the service of an interpreter mostly during the sermon period, to interpret the sermon to English language. In March 1999, following the requests from some of the members to have a pure English service, an English Service held on Sundays between the hours of 9 am and 10:30 am, was established. Following this, between 10.30am and 11.00am comes continental breakfast period. Sunday school follows immediately, between the hours of 11 am and 12 pm. The second service (Yoruba/English service) follows between the hours of 12 noon and 3 pm.

Another unique aspect of my church and her members deal with the amount of hours members spend in the church on Sunday. There is a general statement commonly uttered by the members that *“you [we] only know the time you [we] get to church but*

don't know when you [we] are going home". On those days, our worship service sometimes does not end until 5.00 or 6.00 pm. The adult members love this and raise no objection. The reason for their positive understanding in this regard includes but is not limited to the fact that the church service mode is charismatically and dynamically packed with singing, clapping of hands, stamping of feet and rhythmical dancing. All of these are aided by musical instruments of various types including: bass and lead guitars, talking drum, electronic drum sets, bass and side drums, tambourine, "*sekere*" and others. Through these media, a brilliant spiritual atmosphere is injected into the service and this inwardly brings happiness and joy into the faces and minds of the worshippers. Without question, services of this kind allow the members to enjoy a holistic spiritual experience.

My church also serves as a socio-cultural center—where members always congregate in small groups, both within and outside the main sanctuary immediately after church services, to socialize, and hold meetings of various kinds. Therefore, apart from being a spiritual center, it is also a social cultural meeting point for Yoruba immigrants in United States and the Diaspora. The rubric of our cultural flavor is clearly seen in the mode of dressings of the members. Every Sunday men, women, and children come in beautiful Yoruba dresses, made from different fabrics, ranging from lace materials, to brocades. Every Sunday, the combination of these several colorful clothes and fabrics put on by members always create a very beautiful, flowery and colorful environment within and all around the church premises. However, on special occasion such as wedding celebration, baby christening and birthday celebration, it is always like another day in Yoruba land, in Nigeria. For me, this beautiful atmosphere generated all around the church's environment, is always indescribable, as neighbors often comment that

though they might be living far from Yoruba land, the beauty of our dress code brings Yoruba land very close to them on a platter of gold.

Another cultural expression embedded in my church's identity is in the way the people exchange greetings to one another. People address and greet one another with tremendous respect. Younger women genuflect while the younger men prostrate to salute and greet older people. Contemporaries make respectful bowl gestures while exchanging greetings to one another. Children generally address everyone in the age bracket of their parents as mommy and daddy.

In the church, our children are taught the characteristics and the history of Yoruba culture. Through this cultural education, our children get the opportunity to learn the Yoruba language, dressing, and ethics. This unique opportunity gives our children the ability to understand, articulate, and explore the beauty of Yoruba culture.

Kensington—a neighborhood where diversity blossoms

Kensington, a residential area of Brooklyn named after a western borough in London,¹⁰ is a triangular area bounded by 36th street on the west, Dahill road on the east, and Fort Hamilton Parkway on the north. The Kensington community—the most diverse neighborhood in Brooklyn and one of the most diverse in the United States¹¹ is a neighborhood of mixed cultures and traditions with a diverse array of homes.¹² Being

¹⁰ Sean Flannery and Sean Fox, "Kensington & Parkville," Brooklyn Neighborhoods Present and Past, <http://www.bklyn-genealogy-info.com/town/TheNeighborhood.html> (accessed Nov 26, 2007).

¹¹ Wikitravel, "Kensington," New York (city)/Brooklyn, [http://www.Wikitravel.org/cn/New-York-\(city\)/Brooklyn](http://www.Wikitravel.org/cn/New-York-(city)/Brooklyn) (accessed Nov 21, 2007).

¹² Jeff Grandis, "Kensington/Parkville Brooklyn New York ZIP codes 11218 and 11204": JeffGrandis.com. <http://www.jeffgrandis.com/n-knsington.php> (accessed Nov 21, 2007).

one of the communities in Brooklyn “the Borough of Homes and Churches,”¹³ The Kensington community within its small land area presently houses thirty-four houses of worship, one of which is my church. These houses of worship range from Gothic Cathedral spires and towering synagogues to tiny storefronts, making it very hard to get around the Kensington neighborhood without an encounter of holiness. ‘We can all get along’ is the base line and the common denominator of the beauty of Kensington neighborhood’s spiritual diversity and holiness. Ron Schweiger, Brooklyn’s official historian and president of Beth Emeth y’ohr progressive Shaari Zedek, a Reformed Synagogue in Kensington, recently said, “You go down Coney Island Avenue and you see Arabic signs and Orthodox Jewish right in the same neighborhood. And for the most part we all get along.”¹⁴ Kensington, once part of the town of Flatbush and developed in 1885 after the completion of Ocean Parkway, is a community presently growing with high demand for homes.¹⁵ Most of the houses in Kensington were built in the 1920’s as freestanding row houses and five to six story apartment buildings.

It is now a fact that families from all New York’s five boroughs, especially from Manhattan, are seeking to buy a home in Brooklyn, NY because Brooklyn is no longer an alternative; it is the 1st and the best choice in where to buy.¹⁶

¹³ Wikitravel, “Brooklyn,”: New York (city)/Brooklyn, [http:// . http://www.Wikitravel.org/cn/New-York-\(city\)/Brooklyn](http://www.Wikitravel.org/cn/New-York-(city)/Brooklyn) (accessed Nov 21, 2007).

¹⁴ Ma Probsco, “We Can Get Along: Faith Flourish in Kensington’s Melting Pot,” *The Brooklyn Paper* 30, no 13 (March 31,2007), <http://www.brooklynpapre.com/stories/30/13/30-13kensington-html> (accessed Nov, 21, 2007).

¹⁵ Grandis, “Kensington/Parkville.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

The Kensington community is about ten minutes drive from downtown Manhattan on good traffic time and her home prices range now between \$600,000 to several millions. It is a perfect place for anyone that is thinking of moving to Brooklyn. Demographically, the Kensington community is home to Irish, Polish, Asian, African, Russian, Mexican, Arab, Albanian, and Caribbean people.

The Problem at CAC (First in the Americas): A 20/20 vision

In spite of solid religious cultures, dynamic Yoruba cultural traditions and very sound moral disciplines that we are teaching our children, CAC needs to be visionary with respect to how she will retain these children. Within the next decade, the retention of these children in CAC is vital, and plays a great role in the possible survival of this church in her geographical location and beyond. For example, only two out of ten adults that I interviewed in the Church on Nov.18th 2007 are very much concerned about the future of the Church, while the remaining eight occupied themselves only with the present beautiful happenings in our church today. Up until today, children's (14-18 years old) roles in the Church (in administration, events planning, programs organization and so on and so forth) are still limited only to those assigned to them by the adult members.

In the last decade we lost our young adult members at a very alarming rate to other churches or other denominations. On September 16th 2006, Amazing Grace (a society in our church) took on the challenge to hold a seminar where these children, the church authority, and parents sat down to reason together. The success of this seminar was undercut by the strong effect of the role of a 'Yoruba Institution of Elders' and that of the church authority's rigid exegetical interpretation of biblical verses like; Eph. 6:1-2: "Children obey your parents," and Deut. 5:16: "Honor thy father and thy mother."

Therefore, children, parents, and the authority could not find meeting points on many of the heartfelt and serious concerns raised by the children. In Yoruba tradition, the institution of elders plays vital roles in the social, the spiritual and the ethical life of the community. The elder's native experiences (which cannot be acquired within the four walls of any university) and their God-given wisdom and knowledge are believed to have been ordained and orchestrated by God. These attributes therefore permit Yoruba elders to possess unchallengeable authorities that are not only supported by God, but are believed to possess sacred powers through which vital changes in human life can be effected. "Is any one among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him" (James.5:14). The congregational authority and decision makers of my Church stemmed from and greatly imbibed in the patriarchal cultural traditions of both the Yoruba and that of CAC Founding fathers. It is a standard rule of these patriarchal traditions to "obey and respect the elders first" because these elders are trusted for their wealth of experience. Therefore, when a younger fellow has some concerns about the elder's decisions and rulings, the standard rule of strict obedience and respect come into play.

My project will focus on investigating the generational differences that prelude the disappearance of younger members in our church and in the final analysis will create and implement a model of retention of the young members for our church.

Challenge Statement

Christ Apostolic Church (First in the Americas)—is an *indigenous* African Church, founded in Brooklyn New York in 1976 by a Nigerian *Immigrant*. In the last decade, the church is *losing* her young adults (14yrs. to 18 yrs.), at an alarming rate, because of severe *generational differences*. The *thrust* of my challenge is to study and implement different models that will make the church more *appealing* to and foster retention of the younger members.

Preliminary Analysis of the Challenge Statement

The name “Christ Apostolic Church First in the Americas” identifies my church as the primogenitor of CAC in the United States. Being the first branch of Christ Apostolic Church to be founded in the North Americas, I believe my church should be a pacesetter, and play leading roles in various Christ Apostolic Church activities in the United States. The disappearance of the youth of the CAC (ages 14–18 yrs) from the church to another church is a very serious issue that needs urgent attention in our church. This problem is not limited to our branch alone, but remains a general problem to all CAC branches. However, the task to identify and solve this problem has never been embarked upon by any Christ Apostolic church in the United States. I therefore see this opportunity as a great challenge for my church—the primogenitor of CAC in the United States—to begin working on how to solve this problem.

Various issues such as membership drive and evangelism were originally considered to be the area of concentration by my site team and me. *Membership drive* finally became the most important issue of concern to us all. The reason was because our church needs a dynamic membership drive program in order for her to remain in existence for a long time in this part of the world.

When it became very clear that a membership drive is a huge task to work on within a limited time of six to nine months, I saw one of its pivotal points—*Retention of the young members of the church (14yrs.-18yrs)*—as an urgent need of our church. Because our organization is an indigenous African church, dynamically packed with an African worldview and ethos, it necessitates that we teach new members our mode of services and system of worship, in order for them to enjoy our services and develop interest to stay in our church. Finally, we realized that it is easier within six to nine

months to implement one or two training program(s) to educate our children about our Africanized worship systems,¹⁷ than to train and educate new members.

“The young shall grow” (and the old shall eventually die). Without doubt the adult members of our church, who today constituted about 70% of our congregational population, are growing older and older. Many will retire from their jobs in the next couple of years and perhaps relocate from the geographical location of the church. Historically, Nigerians have a sentimental attachment to their country and always consider it to be their home—a place to go back to sooner or later. The need to train people (the youths) who will take over the baton from these adults after their retirement is of paramount necessity.

It seems that there is no better time to implement this program in our church than now, when the church is in its prime. About ten years ago, young men and women within the age bracket of 25-40yrs (the baby-making age) constituted about 90% of the church’s population. Today, this has dropped to about 45%.¹⁸ As the percentage of baby-making adults decreases, the percentage of the youth (ages 14-18) within the church will also decrease. The time for program(s) like mine is now, when the baby boomers are still very much around.

Among the virtues of this church are its strong Biblical beliefs and teachings that are coupled with her systemic theological understanding and interpretation of God’s nature, and the integration of scripture into the life of the struggling people. Such

¹⁷ A pragmatic Yoruba Christian worship style that is highly sweetened with Yoruba dynamic cultural/traditional flavors.

¹⁸ CAC (First in the Americas) Finance Department Record—Statistics gathered and computed in October 2008 by Deacon Segun Fasusi and Evangelist Femi Adeoye.

teachings allow the poor to communicate God and the scripture, and at the same time see themselves as relevant to their religion. These unique biblical teachings, understandings and interpretations are at great risk of discontinuity if Christ Apostolic Church fails to pass these virtues onto their younger generation. “Train up your child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). Children’s training is a holistic exercise, comprising biblical, sociological, domestic, educational trainings, etc. We need to train our children and encourage them to take over after the present generation of the church if we want our beautiful religious tradition to flourish. “For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment” Gen.18:19. It is a strong belief in my church that the promises made to Abraham by God are ours. However, Abraham’s part of the covenant was to train his children to follow and respect the way and the commandment of God. Jesus also commanded us all, in Acts 1:8, to bear witness to him into the world. Christ Apostolic Church will not be totally fulfilling her spiritual and theological duties to God and to her children if she should fall short of training and teaching these children her deep, superb and very sound religious tradition.

This problem has to be systematically tackled. Both the adults and the younger members of the congregation have to be prepared to compromise, in an attempt to bridge and perhaps close the relational gap that presently exists between them.

The proposed systemic activities and trainings to be implemented by this program have to be carefully and patiently carried out with the continuous and systemic involvement of both adults, in order to achieve a positive result in the short and long run.

Through this program, I expect to raise the awareness of the adults and the committee members of our church about the imminent danger of our church disappearing from her present geographical location, if we fail to train, allow and properly set up the younger members of our church in an encouraging manner, so that they can take over from us. Similarly, I intend to raise the awareness of the younger members about the rich religious heritage of our church.

Without doubt, our church is blessed and she possesses every potential that is necessary to carry out this task. Among my site team members are seven highly trained and experienced children schoolteachers, who not only share the same vision with me, but who are also very excited about this project.

Finally, the church will pay most of the expenses that will be involved in getting this project through, except for expenses that I will underwrite.

CHAPTER 1

Sociological Issue

Yoruba people—a very prominent ethnic group in Nigeria—attached great importance to having children. Yoruba people usually care very much for their children and often go any length to protect them even at the expense of their own lives. God’s mandate to Adam and Eve in Genesis, chapter one, was very clear about the reproduction of the human race on Earth. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him male and female created he him. And God blessed them and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” (Gen.1: 27-28). Looking at this text, many Christians believe and conclude that institution of marriage is established ordained by God for procreation. Similarly, in Yoruba tradition, one of the key purposes of marriage is for procreation—child rearing. To support the Yoruba peoples’ great affinity attached to having children, they often applaud their in-laws through the Yoruba adage “*Eni to fun ni omo re fe se aya eleyii ni ni o fe ki a ku a kurin,*” meaning “he/she that gives his/her daughters hand in marriage to a man favors the continuity of such man’s genealogy on earth.” Traditionally the Yoruba people view children, money and good health as three major essentials of a good life. However, they always maintain that children are the most important of all the three.

“Lo children are the heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psalm 127:3). In Yoruba tradition, children are regarded as great wealth in every family. Yoruba people therefore always aspire to have as many children as God will give to

them. Traditionally, in Yoruba culture, abortion, family planning or the use of contraceptives to prevent pregnancy are forbidden. Children are regarded as free gifts from God and no one (husband, wife, friends or parents) should disturb or stop their free flow from God to humanity. Up until the last five to ten years when Nigeria's economic issues imposed serious financial constraints on people, the average number of children per man used to be between five and twenty. To support this argument, a Yoruba adage says, *Eni bi omo Meta, KO bi. Eni bi meji yagan. Eni bi Ikan ko bi rara, Alaraepin in alagbaja*, meaning; "A mother of three has not given birth; a mother of two is barren. A mother of one has not at all given birth. So-and-so is a person whose body is a veritable abrasive leaf"¹⁹. Therefore, in the olden days, men, chiefs and great kings in Yoruba land used to have children numbering up to sixty, eighty or even more.

Children play strong and important key roles in the unity and the bonding together of husband and wife in Yoruba tradition. In my experience as a minister, I have witnessed several marriages among the Yoruba people that have ended in neglect, separation or even divorce all because the marriages were not blessed with children. Many men, because of their traditional belief of children being the mandatory reward of union of men and women, have decided to seek and have children from other women if and when their wives were unable to bear children. This behavior often caused such men to have a second or third wife. I have also witnessed some situations where a woman, because of their aggressive belief in having children, engage in extra-marital activities and end up having children through another man. On the other hand, I have witnessed

¹⁹ Bola Babalakin, *Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Wise Sayings* (Lagos: West African Book Publishers Ltd, 2002), 29.

situations where women have encouraged their husbands, as Sarah did to Abraham (Gen.16:1-4), to marry other women in order for their marriages to be blessed with children.

Traditionally, every Yoruba person strives very hard to have his/her own children; hence the Yoruba adage *Omo olomo ko se e fi so mo*—that is, “only ones own biological children can in totality be claimed.” This is one of the reasons why adoption was not a popular practice within indigenous Yoruba tradition, and is still practiced on a very low scale in the Yoruba tradition. This is unlike the American and the European traditional cultures where adoption is generally practiced.

Procreation is a sacred order of God. The Yoruba people therefore, admire and cherish both the process and the products of procreation “it must be admitted that the society’s interest in marriages that do not produce children is less than its interest in marriages that do”²⁰ Here is a statement made overlooking a society or a culture—the Western culture that exists and that is being practiced outside the world of the Yoruba people. It is glaring then, that the sociological issue of attaching strong importance to procreation and rearing of children is not limited to the Yoruba culture alone; rather it is a global issue. The central argument against the union of same sex people in our society today is the inability of the ‘couples’ to procreate. Therefore procreation and child bearing is the central and the obligatory part of the social significance of marriage. However, childless marriages are still very much respected, especially in the Christian

²⁰ Watchmen on the wall “One fleshes: a sample Sermon outline”, http://webmail.aol/39997/aol/en-us/mail/print_message.aspx (accessed Dec 7, 2008).

homes and Christian communities, because according to Isaiah.45:7, “God has power over all things.”

CHAPTER 2

From Catechism to Mission

In the fullness of time, God revealed himself and his loving plan of salvation in his beloved son, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God came and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. The father teaches us by coming among us, in his son and Spirit. God's revelation and the manner of its transmission cannot be separated. And in the fullness of time, Gods desire for embodiment received its perfect response.²¹

Right from the days of the Apostles, Christians have recognized that salvation is linked with teaching. In the fullness of time, God came among us in the person of Jesus Christ. One of the ways Jesus ministered to those in his own time was by teaching them the ways of God. Revelation continues among us as we teach about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the way of life in the world. Such teaching is nothing less than the way of salvation.

Through this craft, the church of Jesus Christ has on a platter of gold in the "pedagogy of God," that is, the Lord's teaching. God has his own way of teaching: the church of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy.

Spirit is invited to learn what to teach new converts and how new converts should receive God's messages. Christ Apostolic Church, in her seventy-five years, has

²¹ Willey Petroc, Pierre Cointet, and Barbara Morgan, "The Catechism: Proclamation and Pedagogy," http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/featur2008/print2008/craftcatechesis_july08.html (accessed Aug 13, 2008).

continued to believe that God's pedagogy (the teaching of God's words and God's essence) is to be done only by God. The teachers of the words in CAC, therefore, are expected and supposed to teach the new converts through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of the Almighty God. I remember my first experience of preaching. I went to my senior pastor for the topic of what he would like me to preach on. His response was, "my son, in CAC no one tells the preacher what to preach on, but the Holy Spirit of God." He therefore, advised me to go down on my knees and ask God for Divine direction. I believe this is the reason in CAC there is no yearly lectionary (a locally, nationally, or worldwide general preaching cycle) from which the church's ministers could preach. "We see what the church has called "the pedagogy of God." God has his own way of teaching. According to this pedagogy, God directly reveals what we are to preach and teach, how we are to receive this teaching, and how we are to participate under God's grace in its transmission".²²

The catechism which is the presentation of the "essential" and the "fundamental" points of the faith is described by the encyclopedia of the reformed faith as "a form of instruction on the basics of the Christian faith, usually by question and answer, greatly used in Reformed and other churches."²³ The word Catechism was derived from the Greek word *katechein* meaning "to instruct" as contained in 1Cor. 14:19²⁴ "Yet in the

²² Petroc, "The Catechism."

²³ Donald McKim, *The Westminster Handbook of Reformed Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 26.

²⁴ Ibid.

church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”

In the context and the entire content of the catechumenate document, two issues are very important—the understanding and the teaching of the fundamental and essential belief of faith. I believe these were the pivotal points of the numerous catechisms that were compiled and are in circulation in Christendom. For example, Martin Luther’s small catechism of (1529) was put together because of the ignorance of the church that he observed during his visitation to Saxony Church. It was designed in a classical pattern for children to learn the traditional elements of the creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the dialogue via memorization and repetition of the contents of the Catechism.

Repetition is a wonderful practice that plays well in teaching and learning methodology. For a congregation like the CAC to make her faith, her Biblical understandings and her beliefs relevant and to systematically make it understandable to her offspring, I believe that the need to allow or encourage the offspring to repeat the faith belief in a well-fashioned manner is of great importance. My argument for repetition here is far from the ordinary off-the-head repetition of the creed or mere off-the-head recitation of the essentials of faith without the engagement of one’s mind, soul and inner consciousness. Ordinary memorization and repetition form of learning is no longer in vogue in the post-modern world. It makes learning boring and constricts the learner from personally engaging the text. The church should therefore go beyond the practice of Catechism to that of catechizing which is “the inculcation of Christian knowledge by interrogation and testing often in families on a Sunday afternoon in

response to the morning Sermon.”²⁵ That is, the church should encourage young members to personally reflect over and meditate on the congregational faith and beliefs. The church should encourage her offspring to ask questions regarding their understanding of the faith practices and beliefs of the church, while relevant answers should be provided for their questions. Churches should allow their offspring to personally and individually engage their beliefs and understandings—a situation that will engender their offspring’s involvement and interest in the church’s beliefs and tenets.

The Catechism objectively focuses very much on the new converts. That is, it places great emphasis on how to lead new converts to communion with Christ, to teach the converts the faith and open their hearts to follow Jesus Christ. My argument here is for the church (Christ Apostolic Church, for example), to move beyond catechism to mission, i.e. to work tenaciously on the “old” members of the church (the church’s offspring in this regard) and to lead them into communion with Jesus Christ, to build up a community of strong believers in the faith, in the beliefs and in the understandings of the church. Doing this, I believe will enable CAC to pass on her faith and her awesome religio-cultural values to her next generation, in a similar manner that both traditional catechetical practices and traditional African education that uses proverbs assumed high degree of cultural continuity.

“The word *catechesis* derives from a Greek verb meaning ‘to resound or to echo’. It is used in the New Testament to mean oral teaching.”²⁶ The heart of catechesis

²⁵ Donald K McKim, *Encyclopedia of Reformed Faith* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 60.

²⁶ Alan Richardson and John Bowden, *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 84.

therefore, is ORAL teaching. However, indigenous African teachings go beyond oral methodology. Christ Apostolic Church is an embodiment of Independent African Church (IAC). That is “churches which have been founded in Africa by Africans and primarily for Africans. In other words, such a Church is indigenous”.²⁷ Christ Apostolic Church therefore, is an indigenous African oriented church that is heavily grounded in African culture, African charismatic teachings and African leadership. The teaching structure is pragmatically holistic and charismatic in nature. It includes but is not limited to, equal engagement of both the teachers and the learners in the teaching process (the adults and their offspring’s in this argument). It includes the use of African proverbs in a well-fashioned manner to arouse the mental alertness and speak to the emotion of the learner. Justice Bola Babalakin enumerated this in his book—*Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Wise Sayings*—that “Yoruba is not a language that is speaking by word of mouth alone. Its meaning (and teaching) can better be understood by people who are familiar with signs, gestures and movements of the body and the eyes all of which always properly bring out the meaning of expressions that are being conveyed”²⁸

The teaching and learning procedure in Yoruba culture, also employ excessive use of the proverbs. All of these phenomena contribute to the holistic nature of Yoruba teaching and learning structure. For example, Yoruba tradition is “borne out by the rebuke of the elders to someone who fails to respond to circumstances of a situation accurately. It will be said of him or her KO MOJU KO MORA, meaning: You fail to

²⁷ Alokun, 32.

²⁸ Babalakin, *Selected Yoruba Proverbs*, iv.

observe the eye and the body to understand the message conveyed”²⁹. It is therefore fundamental for learners and teacher of Yoruba culture to employ the use of body and gesture, oral teaching and so on.

In African Culture, the art of reasoning and exegesis are very inclusive. It is very integral to individual formation. In some cultures, the adults’ reasoning instructively dominates the exegesis and the discursive activities between the adults and the young fellows. A Yoruba proverb for example says “omode gbon agba gbon la fida ile ife”. Meaning the township of Ile-Ife was established from the contributions of the young and adults³⁰. African methods of teaching therefore, unlike some other traditions, are not centralized on repetition of already memorized adults’ exegetical works by the offspring, but calls for collective individual contributions. “Faith is not passed on merely by learning: doctrine is but one element in the content of catechesis; growth in faith is a lifelong process; the task of catechizing belongs to the whole Christian community”.³¹

Growth in faith is not a stagnant phenomenon; rather, it is a lifelong process, it is one of the reasons why the Catechetical document goes through a sense of reproduction—for example, as the practice of infant baptism became more wide spread. The Catechumenate—the structure within which the adult convert was initiated into the full life of the church, gradually disappeared and because of the close link between this and catechesis, this early form of Christian teaching also disappeared. With the emphasis now on teaching children rather than adults the method also changed. A process that is in

²⁹ Babalakin, iv.

³⁰ Ibid., 62.

³¹ Richardson, *Westminster Dictionary*, 84.

continuous repetition of itself will eventually lead to fatigue and boredom, as this is the case of the several series of Catechetical documents.

In order for a congregation's biblical understanding and beliefs to therefore be systematically handed over to and be well accepted by her offspring, such congregation's teachings must be a life long process that brings out the collective contribution of spiritual ideas and spiritual understanding from adults and offspring's. However, this process needs to be done in utter faithfulness to the truth that God's revelation comes to us, in the gift of himself to us, and that we are invited into that faith and its transmission in truthfulness to others (the offspring in this argument). As the catechism is a place of "personal encounter," and it is in and through this encounter that a truly spirit-led pedagogy can emerge and inspire one's teaching methods, a pedagogy arising directly from ones prayerful understandings of the faith. It is in and through this encounter that the authentic craft of Catechesis can arise"³². Above all, in teaching and handing over our faith to our offspring, Christ Apostolic Church as a body has to be very prayerful and visionary. Neither Catechism nor church teachings is to be taught, read or done briefly or hastily; rather the catechist or the teacher of the word of God, needs to stay in the text, pray with it and be immersed in it so as to fully appreciate its visionary power and the compelling sense of beauty, goodness, and truth that radiates from its context and its content. As catechism is a *place* of "personal encounter," so faith is an *act* or *craft* of "personal encounter."

³² Petroc, "The Catechism."

As the church (CAC) engages herself in the transferring of her personal encounter of God's revelation to her offspring, she has to be tenaciously patient with her offspring and be open to questions and challenges from these offspring as they too personally encounter the faith, the teachings and the traditions of the church in general. The incorporation of tenacious patience with openness to questions from the offspring's of the church by the teachers of the word will arouse and awaken the interest of the young fellows in the church teachings and in the church liturgy.

In Yoruba tradition the use of idioms, proverbs, and cultural expressions in teachings and speech making allow the learner to contemplate issues as they are and as they emerge. That is, the learners' minds and attitude are prepared to freely gravitate with continued attention and interest towards the context of the teachings as they are being taught. Applying similar principles while teaching their offspring the faith and the belief of the Church will greatly help the church (the teachers of the world), to be visionary as she works with the learners without compelling them (the offspring) to merely recite memorized creed. "A good teacher also needs to see things with the eyes of the one he is teaching, thereby needing to focus on the vision that the learner will have of the subject"³³. A book, a teachers guide or a teachers manual that assist the teacher(s) in the craft of teaching, ought to consider this teaching principle, if such book or guide will well facilitate the work of the teacher(s). Although the catechism is a wonderful teaching book as it adopts a structure and organization that begin teaching with what is small and rudimentary in study for the learners and later move on to what is greater and perhaps

³³ Petroc, "The Catechism."

harder for the learner to grasp. However, the incorporation of the learner concepts of the subject in such a teaching manual (like Catechism) of the church will enable the church to present her faiths and belief to her offspring (learners) within a contemporary point of view.

The church has certain demands or requirements, with regard to pedagogy. She has expectations not only concerning the content of what we teach, but how we teach it. This is the case because the faith generates its own pedagogy”³⁴ Contextually, the faith and belief of the Church (C A C in this case) is very clear. She believes in the virgin birth, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God head, life after death and so on.

The challenges for the church to pass on these faith and beliefs to her offspring (the next generation) lies more with the church’s pedagogical methodology than with the content of faith of the church. While an objective and open methodology will facilitate acceptability of the pedagogical subject, a close but restrictive methodology may hinder it. The Church must be aware of the fact that “the faith is inseparable from pedagogy;”³⁵ whatever form of teaching method the church employs to get the faith across to the learners will directly affect how easily acceptable the faith will be to the learners. Faith and pedagogy are comparable to the destination and the road phenomena. The destination is somewhat inseparable from the road. Meaning, the destination will only be easily reached if the road is very accessible and vice versa. The Church, in her efforts to systematically hand over her Biblical understandings and beliefs to her offspring should

³⁴ Petroc, “The Catechism.”

³⁵ Ibid.

be cognizant of the demands and expectations of her teaching method(s), that it be open, objective and inclusive.

Religious denominations' characteristics revolve very much around their understanding, their interpretation and teachings of the bible. Each congregation is unique in this manner. However, to maintain this uniqueness in her community and to remain relevant within the context of her commitments and her mission to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ, each church of Jesus Christ needs to work hard in her efforts to smoothly hand over her beliefs and understanding of the scripture—her uniqueness, to her offspring. The problems that are associated with the church's ability to hand over her traditions to her offspring or the problems that often prevent the young members of the church from sharing the church's traditions and beliefs are not all about the subjects of the church (the teachings, the traditions, the doctrines, the virtues etc). They have to do very much with the methodology, the conscious application and the introduction—the approach of the church to her younger members.

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov.22: 6). This command is the heart of youth ministry. Jesus trained his disciples daily for a good three years, as he lived with them, ate with them, and shared many things in common with them. This mutual life of togetherness and that of Matt.28: 19-20 (NIV)—“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age”—are the heart of youth ministry. All the news coming out in the media today strongly indicates that our youth are being seriously caught up in the negative forces of

the society. The news, though somewhat depressing and demoralizing, poses no greater challenge for the church than to go out swiftly and urgently with fervor to reclaim and inspire our young fellows. The church cannot afford to allow anything to stop her mission in this regard. Just as the four men in the story of the paralytic man removed all obstacles in order to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus, so the church with great fervor should cut through every obstacle in our society today, to bring their dearly loved children to the feet of Jesus. “This is why youth ministry is needed; the children can’t get into My house.”³⁶ Many of our children that attend the church today, are psychologically sitting on the fence or standing behind the door without actually entering inside the church of Jesus Christ. Their personalities and attentions are borrowed from and preoccupied by peers, violent movies, raps, video games and other psycho and sociological issues. All of these things sway our children into an apathetic state of mind as far as religious education is concerned. The church is not only in a keen competition with these negative forces of our society, she also needs to go the extra mile and do extra work in order to be able to instil her biblical teachings and traditions into the minds of these young fellows. To arouse the interest of these youths in the religious culture of the church and for these youths to move away from the apathy place, the church and not any mystical entity has to inspire them, making the church environment, the theology, biblical teachings, and the curriculum of the church, appealing to these young fellows by way of doing theology as if these children matter.

³⁶ Matthew Parker and Eugene Seals, *Planting Seeds of Hope: How to Reach a Generation of African Americans with the Gospel* (Southfield, Michigan: Institute for Black Family Development and Moody Press, 1998), 41.

Doing Theology As If The Children Matter

Jesus did theology with self-respect and with respect for others; he did theology “as if people matter.” Healing and feeding, forgiving and teaching formed a unity in Jesus’ way of doing theology as an invitation to theologies that are vulnerable, modest and a response to people’s questions and needs.³⁷

Respect is a two-way street; therefore, it becomes very important to treat other people—regardless of the age or sex differences, with respect and dignity while practicing theology. The spirit of treating people with respect and dignity, and doing theology as if people matter is perhaps what made Jesus in Matt.14:13-15; 15:32-33 decide to feed the hungry people right on the spot as opposed to sending them out to fetch for themselves. Jesus, therefore, showed us that while dealing with the physical emptiness of the people, he did not want to take them for granted as mere objects in lieu of their needs, but he wanted to respect the people’s limited wisdom and knowledge that are far less than His—the incarnated God in human nature. Therefore, instead of rebuking the people for failure to bring their own individual food with them, Jesus respected their weakness and limitedness by providing for that specific need where people were. In a similar way, the church of God should be cognizant of the limitations and the weaknesses of her children that make them less spiritually and mentally sophisticated than the adults members. To gain the confidence of the younger fellows, the church needs to respect the younger members’ space, and she needs to treat them not

³⁷ Clement Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 33.

as objects, but rather make them feel that their concerns, positions, and presence are very important.

Doing theology includes forgiving peoples' sins, trusting them and empowering them to carry out specific assignments. In the spirit of practicing this type of holistic theology, Jesus was able to call, recruit, train and commission his disciples. In Luke.9:1 - 10; Luke.10:1 -24 and Matt.10:1-15 Jesus, after he has trained the disciples for a while, empowered and trusted them to go out on their own, representing the Lord. Through this action, the Lord was able to evaluate how the disciples would be able to handle and manage critical situations if and when He, the Lord, may not be physically present. In a similar vein, the church today must learn how to entrust her children with some challenges within and outside the church. Doing this will not only allow the church to evaluate the children's ability to handle critical and important situations, it will also allow the children to have the sense of involvement and interest in church activities—a situation that allows the children to see themselves as part of the team that is running the activities of the church. Invariably, this will enable them (the children), to see the church's vision, mission and programs—including her biblical programs, as our things, rather than looking at it as their (the adults) thing. This kind of holistic relationship/approach will facilitate mutual understanding between the church and her young members and at the same time, it will allow younger members to have deep interest in the teaching of the church—including church's biblical teachings, virtues and beliefs.

Jesus was very compassionate in His ministry. He allowed his unparalleled compassion to over rule the traditional orthodoxy of his time. This behavior not only

conveyed Jesus' beliefs and teachings louder than his verbal messages, it also helps to prepare the ground for His verbal teachings to be well acceptable by his followers. "A deep motivation and driving force for Jesus' doing theology was compassion for people. Jesus was compassionate; he was not afraid to touch people or to be touched."³⁸ On this note, Jesus allowed that sinful woman's sorrowful tears, her hair, and her ointment of confession of her sins to touch and weep out sympathy and forgiveness from Jesus' forgiving soul. (Luke.7:36-50). The leper touched Him (Matt.8:3); he allowed the woman suffering from a hemorrhage to touch him (Matt.9:20) and so on and so forth. When the church of God therefore gets touched by the anguish and the unpalatable feelings of her members, (especially that of the young parishioners), and shows pertinent and inward concerns for their feelings, the church is psychologically saying to those members that the church is not in the business of forcing stuff down the members throat, but she cares greatly about their feelings. This type of holistic approach often permits the members—especially the younger members—to trust the church, learn and accept the beliefs of the church easily.

Proactive Teaching Techniques In This Revolutionary World

The world that our young people live in is changing daily, and the church's techniques of teaching Christ to these young fellows should change also. "Youths today are living in a fast-paced, technological, diverse, hip-hop, roller-coaster-of-emotions type of world."³⁹ In this age of rapid technological explosion, the youth ministers and the

³⁸ Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, 33.

³⁹ Efrem Smith, *Raising Up Young Heroes: Developing A Revolutionary Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 10.

church of Christ, sometimes seem to be merely hanging on for the ride, in their strive now-a-days to nurture these youths for Jesus. For example, school shootings were once an inner-city thing—then we had the Columbine school scenario; people used to feel safe if they stayed away from certain “bad” neighborhoods, then September 11 happened; cultism and gangsterism used to happen in colleges now, the high school students and even the elementary school children are being lured into initiation. “In the midst of all this change, young people’s minds and emotions and the issues that they face have evolved as well.”⁴⁰ The youth ministry and the church’s approach of ministering Christ to her young people however are being forced to change as a result of technology, postmodernism and multiculturalism. Realizing the fact that her young people are in this world, though not of this world, (John.17:14-18), the church of Jesus Christ in her pursuit to hand over her congregational biblical understandings and beliefs to these younger fellow, has to be very pro-active and adopt a practical youth ministry model that connects with youth’s spirits, souls and bodies in the midst of all many existential commotions.

How can we continue to be effective in youth ministry with the challenges that young people face today? How can we share the Bible with passion, listen to the cries of our young people’s soul, teach compassion and justice, focus on intimacy with God as an essential of the Christian journey and get youth to think seriously about their future—all in one youth setting?⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Raising Up Young Heroes*, 10.

⁴¹ Ibid., 11.

To raise up young heroes for God within the context of all the challenges facing the young people of today, the church and youth ministry must go beyond Sunday school, baptism, confirmation, organization of small cell groups, it must embark on a more dynamic and holistic “out-of-the-box” ministry models. One that will teach and daily walk with these young fellows in their transformative pathway to Jesus Christ. “Young people need us to walk alongside with them, seeing them as God sees them, helping them find their spiritual gifts and calls.”⁴² Being proactive in teaching her biblical traditions and belief to her young members would not only make the church’s curriculum interesting to her youth, it will help the youth to discern spiritual gifts embedded in them. Within the spiritual realm, this can make the youth to be more interactive with God, while they could incredibly bring better solutions to some of the world’s problems than the adults of today’s world. For example, in Num.13, while the adults who went as spies to the promised land felt like grasshoppers before the inhabitants of the land, Joshua and Caleb—the only two young people among the spies, remembered their scriptural teachings and experiences that they had with God, in which Jehovah promised to give the promised land to his people. Not only that these two young fellows came to Moses and the Israelites with the message of hope and encouragement, at the end of Moses life (Deut.31:7-8), Joshua, in spite of his young age then, was able to successfully take the baton of leadership from Moses and led the people to the Promised Land. “God is in the business of using the young people as revolutionary leaders.”⁴³ In a similar manner in the

⁴² Smith, 12.

⁴³ Ibid., 13.

book of I Sam.17, David—a very young man, without prior sophisticated military training, solved the problem created by the giant that confronted his people then, in a very revolutionary and unconventional manner. While the highly experienced Israelite soldiers including Saul, their king, felt helpless in Goliath’s presence. David though in his teenage years then, tapped into the spiritual strength of the people of Israel (Jehovah’s omni potency) and brought victory to his people “...for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (Deut. 17:26) and “...The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”(Deut.17:37).

Teaching Through God’s Eye

Children are the apples of God’s eyes and he views them with a very peculiar interest. Jesus therefore said to the disciples, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt.19:14). To those children that were present then when Christ made this statement was not only an encouraging statement for them; it was also a very supportive and provocative statement. Jesus saw these children beyond their physical age and their position in the secular world; with love he saw through them, spiritual potentials that his father has deposited in these young people. This statement from Jesus definitely would have helped to boost the spiritual and self-esteem of these children, as it also would have helped to prepare their minds to be receptive to Jesus’ teachings. Hence, seeing the young people through God’s eye while teaching them the doctrine of the church, means, looking through them and not merely at them; that is, seeing and understanding their inward feelings and not only their outward look. A process that psychologically implies that the church cares very much about the

general well being of these young fellows—physically and spiritually, but is not selfish about throwing only the church’s doctrine to them.

Jesus disciples’ eyes, within the context of this story, were limited only to viewing the physical and the secular issues about these children, while Jesus’ view was totally different. Here, the disciples’ actions indirectly constituted obstacles to these children getting to and learning from Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ today, should therefore, be cognizant of such situation(s) and avoid negating their own quest to teach and get across Jesus’ messages to their young members. The children present in this scene for example, would have trusted and felt more comfortable to learn from and believe Jesus’ teachings than that of his disciples, if both were to simultaneously teach these children then.

Seeing the young members through God’s eye is a prerequisite for teaching them the biblical doctrine of the church. In her attempt to hand down her biblical cultures and the Lord’s messages to her children, the church therefore, must not only speak love to them, she has to see them beyond what these young people see themselves; she has to see them through the eyes of God and understand the spiritual potentials given to them by God. Sitting down in the Sunday school classes or attending church programs does not necessarily rule out the fact that the young fellows in the church are not dealing with some crucial (social, family, personal or spiritual), issues in their lives. Helping these young people to navigate through all their life challenges before or simultaneously as the church teachings are being handed over to them, is a way of seeing them through God’s eye, a situation that will facilitate a healthy learning environment and culture for both the church and her young members.

Apostle Paul for example saw Timothy through God's eyes. He mentored and saw potentials in Timothy, perhaps beyond what Timothy saw in himself, therefore he said

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands by the presbytery... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. (1 Timothy.4:12-16).

In the above statement, Paul encouraged Timothy in verse 12, to never allow any one or his age to define him—Timothy, of the plan of God for him. Meaning, though Timothy then could be very young in age, yet, God had a big plan to mightily use him. God thereby had deposited a copious amount of experience in him and this peculiarity could be visualized and seen in Timothy only by those people that see him through God's eye. Verse 12 therefore, made Paul to gain attention of Timothy's heart while at the same time, Paul prepared Timothy's mind to trust, believe, and be receptive to Paul's teachings. Hence, when in the following verses, Paul brought up the doctrinal issue, the trust and confidence of Timothy's mind which Paul had already gained settled Timothy comfortably down with Paul. Following the above process, Paul was able to successfully teach and hand over the doctrine of Jesus Christ to Timothy. Not only did Timothy imbibe the doctrine, he became a leader in church planting and development. "God is in the business of using young people as leaders within the church...God sees youth—and even little children—through different eyes."⁴⁴ To successfully lead, one needs to learn,

⁴⁴ Smith, 15.

to know, and to understand the sociological, the philosophical, the spiritual, and the psychological history and setting of his/her followers.

Being Cognizant Of Their Heavy Eyes

In this post-modern world, the younger members of the church will have less difficulty in learning and accepting the church's biblical teachings and virtues, if the church can keep them psychologically and spiritually awake. "Theology is an invitation to wake up: to be mindful and attentive"⁴⁵. It is wonderful to groom and to have young people who will be mindful of our world, who will always see this world and its contents with new and awakened eyes. Theology therefore, is about mindfulness and being cognizant of what difference(s) an awakened person can make, create and influence in our society. It is amazing what a person who is fully awake can do, and all the difference he/she can make in our society today, not only in the secular world but within our spiritual world also. For example, the renowned world evangelist and world's pastor of our time—Billy Graham—was invited at a teenager of sixteen by Dr. Ham in North Carolina, to wake up and clear his then heavy eyes from the wretchedness of his past. Billy Graham in his autobiography said

And then it happened, sometimes around my sixteenth birthday, on that night, Dr. Ham finished preaching and gave invitation to accept Christ. After all his tirades against sins, he gave us a gentle reminder. "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet a sinner Christ died for us, (Romans.5:8 KJV)...On the last verse of that second song, I responded. I walked down to the front; feeling as I had lead weights attached to my feet, and stood in the space before the platform."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Sedmak, 1.

⁴⁶Billy Graham, *Just As I am: The Autobiography Of Billy Graham* (New York: HarperOne, 1997), 29.

Dr. Ham met young Billy Graham when his eyes were very heavy. “Before my conversion, I tended to be touchy, overly sensitive, envious of others, and irritable.”⁴⁷ Dr. Ham in his continuous attempt to help young Billy to discern the wonderful gift that the Lord had deposited in Billy’s life was very cognizant of the heaviness of Billy’s eyes. Therefore, to gain Billy’s attention and to have access to his mind, Dr. Ham, with gentle and tender approach philosophically, psychologically, and spiritually met young Billy Graham at the particular position that he was then. Through persistence and provocative messages, Dr. Ham was then able to speak to and address the heaviness of the young Billy’s eyes and got him to finally wake up to accepting the spiritual facts about the purpose of Jesus Christ in his life. Today, the awakened Billy Graham has made so much difference in our Christian world—that is what theology is about.

Waking up is a journey; Jesus invited people to this journey...Following Jesus means overcoming blindness, deafness, and the inability to speak. Doing theology is a way of following Jesus. It is an invitation to wake up.⁴⁸

Therefore, in her attempt to influence the younger members of the church to pick up the church’s virtues, her teachings, and her biblical understandings, the church, first and foremost, needs to help these young members to overcome their blindness and deafness—‘the heaviness of their eyes.’ Jesus invited us all to wake up from deep sleep; he woke up Lazarus (John.11:39-44), and invited the daughter of Jairus to wake up from her sleep (Mark.5:40-43). “And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy” (Matt.26:43). Here, in the garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus went to pray

⁴⁷ Graham, *Just As I Am*, 32.

⁴⁸ Sedmak, 2.

with his disciples along side with him, he came up to his disciples' position and found them sleeping again, because their eyes were heavy for sleep. These are the disciples who were supposed to take over from Jesus Christ, his biblical beliefs and his biblical virtues. The disciples who should, at that moment grab every bit of teaching and learning experiences, that they could possibly get from Jesus, before he was taken away from them. But their eyes were tired. Jesus being cognizant of the necessity for them to behave otherwise within the mixture of their human frailties invited them with agape love to stay awake. Similarly, our young fellow's eyes today, are heavy. Heavy, from staying late every night watching television and playing video games. Heavy from hanging out late with friends, peers and from the terrific trauma of the family desolate—especially those young fellows from single or separated parents. Heavy from following their daily routines in their schools. Heavy from doing those miniature jobs—where they receive so small a salary, but with gracious minds. Heavy, from the attractions, and the distractions from the movie stars, and the fashion world, within the context of our society today.

Theology is about encouraging people to wake up. In their attempt to influence, teach and handover their biblical beliefs and their theological virtues to their young members, the church of Jesus Christ needs to be cognizant of these young members' heavy eyes. All of which they suffered from the above listed circumstances. Simultaneously, or before the church's attempt to influence these young members with her beliefs, her virtues and her doctrine, the root of the heaviness of eyes of these young fellows needs to be seriously addressed by the church. The church therefore needs to encourage the young to stay awake in life as such action will positively help the church to

easily get across her message(s) to these young members. Those who are awake will make best use of their tools.

A hammer in the hands of a sleeping person is more (and at the same time less) than a hammer, and everything becomes a nail. A wise (and awakened) person will use tools like knowledge and insight wisely; a sleeping person will use tools half asleep—whereas those who are fully awake can make their own tools. Again it is all about waking up.⁴⁹

Similarly, spiritually and psychologically awakened young people in the church will make use of the church's teachings as knowledgeable materials that are worthy to hold on to, but not as another regular experience within the cause of their lives (for example peer pressure), that they some how have to pass through, but eventually need to outgrow as the need requires.

Revolutionary Ministry Model

We are living in a world today that is highly revolutionary. The social, political, economic and technological aspects of today's post-modern life are in very high gear of revolution as compared to that of our previous generations. If the church therefore cares for her offspring (the Xers of our world today), to hold on to and strongly imbibe her traditions and beliefs, then it becomes very apparent that the church's beliefs; her teachings, her biblical understandings and her biblical interpretations need to be revolutionized in light of the revolutionary movements that are going on in our world today. The world that our children are living in today is a world of technological

⁴⁹ Sedmak, 5.

revolution. For example, the type of cell phones and the different kinds of services that they use, the types of sneakers that they wear and how very fast each brand of these sneakers become obsolete, the unimaginable way that they learn and use computers are amazingly revolutionary compared to that of the generation before them. These highly technological revolutionary movements that characterized the life of our young fellows (the Xers) in this post-modern world today somewhat seems very Bezier and hysterical to the baby Boomers, the Silent, or the G.I. The church in the teaching and presentation of her beliefs and messages to these young fellows must be in tune with and be on the same page with the post-modern world's revolutionary accounts. Taking this way will enable the church to radically meet these young fellows where they are within the context of this post-modern world. "In the meantime, we have fallen way behind in presenting a gospel that reaches them where they are and calls them to a radical new belief system and a lifestyle that can have an impact on their generation."⁵⁰

However, many preachers and teachers of the gospel today—including myself before this time, fail to believe that revolutionary movements do actually line up with the Bible. They view revolution through the secular, the political and the social eyes and thought it to be limited only to these movements. Whereas, the story of Exodus, the stories of Daniel and the stories of the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ—in the Bible, are all about revolution. For example, when God sent Moses to Pharaoh—the king in Egypt to let his people (the Israelites) go and serve him (the Lord), in a land chosen by God, other than the land of Egypt, the words of God then to Pharaoh was highly

⁵⁰ Smith, 17.

revolutionary. Revolution means a complete change from one thing to another. Revolt means to turn away with disgust, to take your allegiance from one and give to another. God, therefore, here was in the business of changing the subservient way that the Israelites were living then in the land of Egypt, which perhaps might have made the Egyptians view the omnipotent God of Israel as a subservient God to those small gods of Egypt. God was then about to change the traditional views of the Egyptians that undermined God's position, the presence and the power of Him the God of Israel into a revolutionalized view that will never again underscore his omnipotence in the world of the Egyptians.

If the church could positively connect to the young fellows at their precise location in this post-modern world, using the young fellows modern day revolutionary settings, the young generation will not only imbibe the traditions and beliefs of the church, they will understand the church better, feel more useful and more relevant in the church's settings. The young people could invariably bring positive impacts and unimaginable changes to the church settings in lieu of what is going on in the church today.

The bible invited us to take revolutionary warfare approaches to solving problems that may confront us on our spiritual journeys in life.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Eph.6:12-13).

The church should see the problems that are confronting her younger members from taking over her beliefs and biblical understandings, not only as sociological, psychological, or philosophical problems alone, but also as a spiritual problem. In order

for the church to overcome the storms of life in this regard and serve as the medium through which her young fellows will come into relationship with God and Jesus Christ, the church therefore needs to put up the armor of God through the use of revolutionary approaches to solving these spiritual battles. “A revolutionary approach that sees ministry as a spiritual battle is the first step in getting beyond a simple youth group approach and moving toward a holistic approach that provides relevant and practical models of youth ministry”⁵¹

Getting to the crux of the Issue

“The ant, insect, or larva that is eating and destroying the vegetables, live with the vegetables in the field” (an African adage). This basically means that the vegetables were not eating up itself just for destruction sake; there are some destroying and vicious animal that are daily busy doing the destruction job. The farmer therefore, needs to deal with the devourer in a tactical and serious manner, in order for the farmer to have a successful vegetable firm. It is not that our young people are untalented and are incapable to hold on to and embrace their church’s biblical beliefs and biblical teachings. In fact, they are highly gifted. If the adults could help them to develop their gifts and prepare them to cultivate strong intimacy with God, then, they could be actively and mightily useful in the harvest field (Matt.9:35-38). “They can assist adult Christians in taking on the giant issues of today...as well as participate in roles of teaching, worship and other leadership roles that are normally considered for adults only.”⁵² Some of the reasons they are not lending their helping hands in the field are because of some ‘lions’

⁵¹ Smith, 21.

⁵² Smith, 49.

that are operating within the circumstances that surround their life. In both the secular and the spiritual life lions are considered to be very vicious, therefore, they have to be handled as being highly dangerous and not be mistaken for domesticated house pets. Lions under the care of their trainers (in talk shows for example) seem to be harmless, while the trainers seem to be superb supermen that have circumstances surrounding these animals' behaviors under their control. However, on several occasions, whenever something startle these lions, the handlers often lose control, and if the lions snarl, then the trainers and the viewers will experience the lions' true nature. The same is true of the spiritual, the sociological, the parental, the psychological, the generational and the philosophical lions in the lives of our young people today. The adults do sometimes underestimate the strength of these lions and the damage that they could cause obstructing the young people from answering their callings. David did not underestimate the purpose of neither the lion nor that of the bear posing threats to the calling he got from his father to be a good shepherd. David therefore, wasted no time in killing them all. The church should encourage their younger fellows to treat the lions in their lives as David did. They should be encouraged not to allow lions to roam about within the context of their lives. "They must become lion-killer through intimacy with God and the strength that it provides."⁵³ Lions are not household pets and should not be kept within the context of our abode.

"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the

⁵³ Smith, 50.

same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter. 5: 8-9). Isn’t it very fascinating that the Bible described our secular and spiritual attackers as lions? Just as the Lord Jesus Christ did not promise us a free ride in life, that is, He did not promise us a life without problem and tribulations, but certainly assured us that He will go through the problem with us always. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John.16:33). In the same token, because our young people are Christians, who have surrendered their lives to Jesus does not make them live a life that is free of attackers. We live our lives today in a world that is heavily invested by these lions. These predators are always roaming about posing great threats to our struggles to answer our callings. We must therefore be prepared to deal with them always, through faith that is made powerful via our strong intimacy with God. Likewise, the church of God in her attempt to pass her biblical virtues to her young fellows, should realize that there are many secular, social and spiritual lions that are attempting to frustrate the efforts and prevent these great young fellows from pursuing and answering well this calling. To enable the church’s messages to easily get across to and sink well with her young fellows, the church must not shy away from this (lion) problem, she must address the issue. She must save her vision to her younger generation from the jaws and the claws of the lion. She must educate the young people about the presence of these predators within the context of the church’s teachings and she must encourage the young fellows to do as David did, to develop a strong intimacy with God through which they will be able to strengthen their powers to conquer this enemy. The church must understand “that as Christians, we must deal with the lions in our personal lives in order

to be able to serve and advance the kingdom of God in our public (and our spiritual) lives.”⁵⁴ Conquering the lion will permeate the church teachings and messages to cut through to the young people’s side with minimum obstruction and allow these fellows to be motivated as David was motivated to grow from lion killer to a giant slayer.

Having killed the lion and the bear that came across his path way as a shepherd boy, David’s intimacy with God, his belief and trust in God’s delivering power became stronger and all these got him prepared for his next mission. David was empowered to answer his call to deliver his people, Israel, from shame and ridicule they then suffered from Goliath-the Philistine’s giant. David, in the presence of people of Israel and the people of Philistines, was able to restore the honor bestowed of God, as the omnipotent and the deliverer of his people. In the same way, the church’s young people that have been taught how to defeat the lion of their lives will be able to take the church’s mission-her beliefs and biblical virtues into the next level. They will be able to confidently take the giants that may come their ways (as David did), even when the adults are no longer in close distance to them.

Before the Bible described our attackers as ‘lions’, it gave the church a divine clue on how she can mightily take the lions out. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1Peter.5:6-7). The church therefore, in her attempt to work with her younger fellows to take out the lions and the giants in their lives, needs to teach these young people how to ‘battle on their wheels’, that is, how to use their knees to pray

⁵⁴ Smith, 53.

fervently to God. It is very disturbing how the church of God, the people of God and the world that we live in generally, are becoming less and less prayerful. In our generation and within the context of its technological advancement and secular achievements, many goals have become easily attainable as compared to the generation before us. For example, to travel from New York to Jerusalem this time and age, is not only a matter of hours by flight; it is less tedious and much saver than it was in the biblical days, when people had to journey for days within the land of Israel. To journey from the suburb towns/villages to the city of Jerusalem then in the biblical era sometimes took several days and involved lots of risk. In the narration of the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke.10:30-36), Jesus used the metaphor of how risky and dangerous it was then to journey within cities in the land of Israel. It was the frustration, the risks and the dangers that confronted them which eventually prevented them from easily achieving their goals. The Biblical era people were therefore more reliant on the efficacy of prayers, which got them through in their endeavors more than the people of this generation—the twenty first century's generation. However, the Church of God prays, less today than the church in the biblical era; people pray less for their children, they pray less with their children. Perhaps, this is because their children are less in castration these days than the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, in the land of Babylon, in the land of Philistine. These phenomena have perhaps made the church to rely very much on the technology, the judiciary and of course, the government of the day, to solve her children's matters rather than taking them to God in prayer. Jesus taught his disciples and handed over his beliefs to them through prayer channel. He taught them to strengthen their faith with prayer and fasting.

Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting (Matt.17:20-21).

If Jesus the incarnated God can take problems that he encountered in the course of doing his ministry on earth to his Father, what else could be stopping His church on earth, to take problems confronting them in the course of handing over their beliefs and their religious virtues to their young members to God, through Jesus Christ in prayer. The church of Jesus Christ should therefore understand that the master key to solving her problem of sustenance is 'PRAYER'.

CHAPTER 3

From Post-Modern To Globalization

Ours is an age of paradigm shift, in world Christianity as much as in any other field⁵⁵. Dr. Dale Irvin in his article “A New Understanding of World Christianity for the 21st Century,” in *The Future of Religions in the 21st Century*, argued the magnificent paradigm shift noticed in the last fifty years and now dominant effects of the European Christianity within the context of every Christian relations as vividly seen in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In his arguments, he noted that as far back as fifty years ago, the activities and the relationships of the missions in Asia, Africa and Latin America reflected European culture. The result he argued is different today, as we see the mission’s attitudes and relations significantly embodied the indigenous attitude and the local identities. The paradigm shift is highly visible in technological advancement, educational advancement, and political engagement and so on. Therefore, to continue to be relevant within the context of the rapid changes in our world, the Church also needs not be stagnant in her appearance, relation, mission and spirituality.

As most observers inside and outside the churches saw Christianity to be essentially tied to European social, political, and cultural history in its identity, then questions may be asked if I observed and see Christ Apostolic Church (CAC First in the

⁵⁵Peter T. M. Ng, ed., *The Future of Religions in the 21st Century*: (Hong Kong: Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese society, 2001), 215.

Americas in this argument) to be inextricably and essentially tied to Yoruba social, political, and cultural identities to some extent. For example, my recent findings about why men and women traditionally sit separately inside CAC Churches, revealed the reasons to be more of the social/cultural issues that transpired within the contextual Yoruba traditional life dating back to pre-modern era, than the spiritual reasons. However, in a similar manner, that Christianity and the Western Christendom have witnessed paradigm shifts in several aspects within the last fifty years and now, I expect Christ Apostolic Church to shift position in this respect without watering down their spirituality and unique strong faith in Jesus Christ. Christ Apostolic Church branches located in other parts of the world aside from Yoruba (Nigerian) geographical location have congregations that have or dwell in different social cultural and political environments that are different from that of the indigenous Yoruba cultural environment in Nigeria. Therefore, a typical member in Christ Apostolic Church, First in the Americas, located in Brooklyn, New York, may have some questions why he or she has to sit separately from his or her spouse inside the sanctuary, not because of a spiritual reason but merely because of social cultural activities that went on within the contextual Yoruba community life in Nigeria about fifty to seventy-five years ago, which has no bearing on him/her. A paradigm shift in such area will not only appease the members, it will also allow the church (CAC, First in the Americas in this regard) to compete favorably on an equal footing with several other independent African churches in the diasporas which are very objective in this respect.

Christianity has lost much in the way of its privileged position as the dominant religious and cultural force in the western world. The same fifty

years have seen explosive new growth in Christian numbers and vitality in Africa and parts of Asia.⁵⁶

Similarly, in spite of the explosive new growth in Christian numbers in Nigeria and in the Diaspora in the last couple of decades, Christ Apostolic Church in the last fifty years, has lost some of her privileged position as the dominant Pentecostal (Aladura) Christian church in Nigeria and in the Diaspora, to several independent Pentecostal churches like; Redeem Christian Church, Mountain of Fire, Deeper Life Christian Church and so on. There is a clarion call therefore for spiritual and organizational renewal and a paradigm shift for CAC, essentially in some aspects of identities of the church, in order for her to maintain her vital position in Christendom.

In the last couple of decades back in Nigeria, Christ Apostolic Church consisted mainly of people of homogenous culture, whereas, when the church crossed the Atlantic to the Northern Hemisphere, it bumps into and comes across people of heterogeneous cultural heritage. Many of these people find the cultural traits of CAC religious tradition strange. For instance, separate seating arrangement for men and women within the sanctuary and a mandatory head covering policy for all women of the church inside the sanctuary, are unfamiliar.

Directly and indirectly, we are bumping up against one another's cultures everyday, doing so in ways that challenge one another's natural traditions and understandings. Everywhere we go we find cultures and people crossing borders, coming into contact with one another, affecting one another in new and unexpected ways in this global village we now inhabit.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ng, *The Future of Religions*, 216.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 228-229.

Also, Christ Apostolic Church arriving in the western world (United States for example) finds several new cultural practices quite different from her indigenous culture overseas- in Nigeria. For example, the church now witnesses in United States of America, a culture where woman wears pants and where men and women find it very comfortable sometimes to wear casual dresses to church—situations that are practically unheard of in Nigeria, the home base of Christ Apostolic Church.

Boundaries and borders in human experience are places of danger⁵⁸. There are places where identity is questioned and change most immediately manifested⁵⁹. When identity issues are being questioned, I believe a systemic shift in identity's position to accommodate change(s) is mandatory. In a couple of my visits to Sikh temples in New York, I never recall being asked to cover my head inside the temple. However, my recent visit to Golden Temple (culturally, the most significant shrine of the Sikhs), in the city of Amritsar in India, took a different turn. Everyone, both the visitors and the Sikh people, are mandated to cover their heads inside the temple. Sikhs in New York perhaps realized the cultural differences of the visitors to their temple in New York and thereby shifted position on the "head covering" identity issue in their temple in New York. Whereas, in India—the home base of the Sikh religion, where the spiritual and the theological reason(s) behind this head covering identity is not being questioned, adherents to this identity, pose no problem, to neither the indigenes nor the visitors. Similarly, on a social cultural point of view, the Sikh females in India are very restrictive and highly selective

⁵⁸ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1966), 114-128.

⁵⁹ Ng, 229.

in their interactive dealing with foreigners, whereas, here in New York my experience with them is a pleasant one. They are very friendly; they are quick to give warm handshakes and highly hospitable. My argument here then is, while some of the Christ Apostolic Church's fundamental principles—like separate seating arrangement, could be mandatory on the local levels in Nigeria—where such identity or principal is not being questioned by the parishioners. However, on the global level—where there are cultural differences, different branches of the church should be allowed to practice such identity phenomenon in whatever way it will best suit the culture where the church branch is operating.

Globalization is a process of “compression of the world” that refers “both to increasing social-cultural density and to rapidly expanding consciousness⁶⁰. Through globalization, our world has become very small indeed and daily with the help of technological development, it keeps getting smaller and smaller. For example, with the help of today post-modern world's technology, one can worship at Christ Apostolic Church, Mushin branch in Lagos, Nigeria and in matter of hours he/she can be in Christ Apostolic Church, First in the Americas in Brooklyn, New York. This situation was not possible seventy-five years ago, when the church was founded. Globalization, therefore, has taken cultures from their different convenient and comfortable local levels and crisscrossed them with other cultures. In CAC, First in the Americas for example, the Yoruba culture—the fundamental culture of the church, has mixed with the Caribbean and the American cultures. Our children therefore are born into and are being raised in

⁶⁰ Ng, 231.

the middle of all these. The proper understanding and identification of the contextual globalization effects on the Church's cultural issues and how essentially these issues relate and translate differently on global levels from the local levels will help the Church to shift positions wherever possible. However, complete refusal to shift position in this regard may amount to "tribalism" in some respect. "Tribalism universalizes the local, whereas, globalization self-consciously embraces its own particularity."⁶¹ For example, operation of the Church programs excessively in the foundational vernacular of the Church without proper consideration of the local lingua franca of the Church's geographical location may translate to "lingua-tribalism" on the part of the Church. About forty, fifty years ago in Nigeria, Roman Catholic Church's Masses were entirely being conducted in Latin. This was at the expense of the Yoruba language, the vernacular of the local parishioners, and the English language, the lingua franca of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where the Churches were actually located. Should the Roman Catholic Church authority in Nigeria today completely refuse to shift position in this language phenomenon, in a way to accommodate their parishioners' concerns, the Church may not only be viewed as being tribalistic to some respect, her relevancy in Nigeria local geographical locations within today's globalized world effects, may be greatly affected. This is because the globalization of the world today can permit the Church parishioners to watch Masses conducted in English language from the television sets within the convenience of their living rooms.

⁶¹ Ng, 232.

Thinkers from the North Atlantic World have tended to reduce modernity to its Western European version, thereby eclipsing and erasing the contributions Africans, Asians, and Amerindians have made to the world system that has emerged over the past five centuries⁶². The evil done to the Africans, Asians and Amerindians, in lieu of their contributions into the world system and to the modernity, by the North Atlantic thinkers, cannot be worse than those perpetrated against women and their contributions into the Church, by the Church fathers.

Jesus, Paul and Peter were way ahead of their Chauvinistic cultures in granting personhood and dignity to women... Women had never known a man like Jesus—he never put them down or flattered or patronized them... Women itinerated with Jesus. They were commissioned by him to tell the good news of the resurrection.⁶³

In their attitude towards women in the church's leadership ministry, the early Christians are way ahead of the twenty-first century—the post-modern, Christian churches and their ruling bodies. I believe this problem of limiting or restricting the role of women in the leadership level of the Church came into the Church from the social and political communities where church organizations originated. This problem, I believe again, is more of the patriarchal cultural nature of the environment(s) where the church was born and supported, than a religious issue. Socially and politically, our world today, has greatly shifted position in her chauvinistic natures that one time restricted women from attaining or occupying some leadership position within our community. The shift has enabled the world to witness women being elected as Judges, Senators, and Prime

⁶² Ng, 232.

⁶³ Rowland Croucher, *Women and Ministry*, <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8195.htm> (accessed August 13, 2008).

Ministers. In fact, for the first time in over two hundred years of American Independence, a woman came close to being nominated as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in 2008, while at the same time a woman is close to becoming the nation's vice president within the Republican Party. Some churches have shifted position in this respect, as is being done in the secular world today, appointing women to leadership roles within their organizations. Although I am in no way advocating that Christ Apostolic Church should immediately start to ordain women as pastors, my argument is that the church, CAC, should revisit her position(s) in such areas where contributions of the female members of the church are being undermined.

Fifty to seventy-five years ago, when Christ Apostolic Church has not spread beyond the indigenous Nigerian community, the female member of the church then were less agitated and some how very docile. They obeyed the church ruling fathers and took their instructions to the letters, without question. However, as the church (Christ Apostolic Church, First in the Americas in this argument) finds herself in the post-modern American culture in the twenty-first century, she is faced with the challenges of the female members of the church (precisely the young female members) being very argumentative, and quick to question why the female members of the church are good enough to be the Sunday school teachers but not fit to preach or read the Bible lesson during the church services. I believe revisiting of the issue of women in leadership roles in Christ Apostolic Church may help the church to shift her chauvinistic position on the issue—a situation that may arouse the interest of the church's dynamic, energetic, and pragmatic female members of the church to hold on to the church's very rich Biblical and spiritual teachings.

Given the history of the past five hundred years, the reality of the contemporary world systems, and the effect of globalization, it is a border that runs through the middle of every local history today. The modern/colonial constitutes a border that makes a fissure running through the midst of each culture, region and history of the world. Historical analysis, cultural reflection, social theory, and theological construction remain inadequate without attending to its presence. Given the multiplicity of its historical locations, it is logical that this border takes a variety of shapes or manifestation.⁶⁴

Every institution, including the religious organization, within the content of her historical background, experiences some sort of imaginary borderline(s) that separate their past from the present—colonial from the modern. Dr. Dale Irvin in his article, "A New Understanding of World Christianity for the 21st Century," used Walter Mignolo's idea on this subject to describe this imaginary lines as "the border between global designs and local histories as that between the modern and the colonial, a border he represents by the term "Modern/Colonial."⁶⁵ The Christ Apostolic Church organization (a specific case study within the context of this project) identifies with this ideology contextually within her local histories and today's global designs. Directly or indirectly, the above-described imaginary borderlines are formed with the administrative or operational activities of CAC. For example, in the area of the leadership, the administrative and functional activities of the church, the church's adult males have dominant positions. This practice, thereby seriously undermines the gifts and the presence of the female and the younger members of the church. To afford the young and the female members of CAC the opportunity to properly showcase their potentials, talents, and gifts, CAC must cross the border from her historic "localized" zone into the post-modern "globalized" one. Doing

⁶⁴ Ng, 233.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

this border crossing, will foster smooth taking over of the church from the adults, by the offspring of the church.

Border crossing is not limited to the CAC, or to a specific organization. It is not limited to a particular time or the like. It is an awesome activity that continues to manifest its relevance in our social, political and religious world. In the religious realm and within the contextual historic narrative of Christian movement are found several border crossings. In New Testament for example, “Jesus is represented as engaging in repeated “boundary breaking” activities as he crosses social, religious, cultural and political borders of his day.”⁶⁶ In Luke 15:1-2 for example, “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” Here in Jesus’ time was an imaginary line already drawn to separate the Pharisees (the so called “holier than thou”) and the sinner (the marginalized, the outcast and the oppressed members of the society.) However, Jesus’ messages throughout the New Testament proclaimed the essence, the reality and the compelling evidence for him and who-so-ever wish to follow his teachings, to cross over to the side, to the side of those who were in the periphery of the “Abrahamic blessing,” the Abrahamic covenant with God.

Jesus identified his mission as being directly in particular to those who were on the theological margins. Those who were on the periphery of the covenant God made with Israel as a people. He was committed to the marginalized, or those who were considered the least of the society of his own day. He lived in solidarity with the outcasts and proclaimed the coming of God’s realm from the periphery of history⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Ng, 234.

⁶⁷ Ng, 234.

No wonder in Luke 7:34, “The son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, behold a gluttonous man and a wine bibber, a friend of publican and sinner.” Jesus, in spite of continuous attack from the rulers of his day—then “the power that be”, regarding his strong solidarity with the people of the marginalized side of the border, remained unshaken on his belief and support for the subject. If our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine head of the Church, could embrace position shifting or “border crossing” from the historic but exclusively fundamentalist practices of the church, into a new inclusive practice, the church—the body of Jesus, without agitation, should emulate Christ’s good example in every respect of her marginalization activities. Dr. Dale Irvin exegesis of Matt. 28:19, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...” as “move outside your center, go to the margins”⁶⁸. I believe this is evidently a call to all Christians including the body of Christ to get out of their comfort zone and go to the margins and associate with the marginalized people of God. Identification and association with the marginalized people is an apostolic movement that makes border crossing (in whatever form the border(s) appears within the togetherness of Christian relationship), to be smooth and highly appreciated by both the opportune and the less opportune members of the fold. Dr. Irvin argues further and said “As the apostolic movement crossed the borders of language and culture it begins to embody a new, trans-cultural form of social life...Gentiles began to enter the movement without undergoing circumcision...Jews and Gentiles not only prayed together...they ate together as well violating the basic purity codes that governed

⁶⁸ Ng, 235.

Jewish dietary practice.”⁶⁹ As the Christian religion witnessed a mass drift of the marginalized people into Christian faith when the imaginary border lines of language and culture were crossed in the Apostles days, so do I believe that Christ Apostolic Church will witness an unparalleled acceptability of her faith and belief by her offspring if and when those borders that normally separate the male and the female or the adults and the young members of the church are demolished or crossed.

Barrier (border) breaking and moving out of the comfort zone into the uncomfortable one is a task required of every member of the church including the Pastors. For example, as an associate pastor in CAC, First in the Americas, with all the respect and honor accorded me in the church, I believe that I need to move out and beyond the honor and respect decorations accorded me and be associated with the children and the women who are marginalized in some respect of our religio-cultural principles in CAC. I need to challenge myself to move beyond the religio-cultural locale, the borders of our religion tradition fundamentality and culture, into the world of the female and that of the young members of our church—a world of the marginalized in some sense.

As a religious organization (Christ Apostolic Church within the content of this paper) crosses over the borders from their founding base (the original place of the church’s establishment) into new worlds in obedience to Christ’s instructions as contained in the book of Matt. 28:19-20 and Act 1:8, that Christians should go into the world and propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ. Doing this, the church found herself in

⁶⁹ Ng, 235.

the midst of several cultures different from the one at the home base. The new world of Christ Apostolic Church, First in the Americas, for example, is a globalized world that is highly advanced and heavily sophisticated both socially and technologically. If the church can use or apply the new world's cultures as a medium to bring Christ's message to the inhabitants of her new world, the inhabitants will be able to see and relate to Christ from the perspective of their own culture.

Using the musical element of the American globalized world for example, to shift position to accommodate and incorporate the rhythm(s) of the contemporary American music into the church's music in CAC, will allow the young members and the new converts (who are non Nigerians) to dance and praise God from the perspective of their contemporary musical world. Interestingly, Christ Apostolic Church, First in the Americas to some extent, has indirectly shifted position in this regard. Traditionally, Christ Apostolic Church has an "unwritten law" that forbids the use of certain musical instrument like "*gangan*" (talking drum) within the church services. Whereas, in the musical and the social world of the Nigerian baby boomers (especially the Yoruba baby boomers) that constitutes greater percentage of CAC, First in the Americas church's population, "*gangan*" (talking drum) is in vogue and the major musical instrument of the post-modern days. For several years, talking drum has been incorporated into CAC, First in the Americas worship service and the result has been overwhelmingly acceptable to both young and the adult members of the church. Today, the talking drum is no longer a taboo, an abomination or a forbidden instrument in the worship services; it is gradually being accepted and used in several other churches—CAC and other Nigerian Pentecostal "Aladura" churches.

The experiences of new identity that emerged for better or for worse, set in motion a new process of differentiation that literally created a new border between those within the Christian movement and those outside.⁷⁰ Crossing or abolition of these imaginary borders within the body of Christ will not only give the body of Christ a new identity that will unite the body in such a way that the body will be separated or be made less dependent on things of this secular world, but set her mind, eyes and soul upon things that are spiritual and heavenly. Jesus advocated this point in one of his farewell addresses to his followers as written in John 17:15-16, “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Apostles Paul and Peter equally echoed Christ in their messages to the body of Christ as found respectively in Phil. 3:20 and 1 Peter 2:11 that Christians’ political membership or citizenship are in heaven, as they are therefore strangers in this world and to things of this world. In essence, Christians are expected to prove to the world that they are different people. To succeed in this demonstration in the world, Christians therefore need to remove any imaginary social, physical or secular borderlines that might separate them within, and shift the borderlines between the entire body of Christ and the secular world in which she dwells. “The end was a celebration of unity amidst diversity of radical community and radical difference.”⁷¹ Shifting out the borderlines from within will allow the body of Christ to be more focused on her mission on earth—a situation that is likened to a human body which

⁷⁰ Ng, 236.

⁷¹ Ibid., 237.

consists of, or has different parts that perform different functions but all joined together and being made to be dependent on one another by one Heart. The mission of Christ Apostolic Church (First in the Americas) is to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ via her highly rich and very unique spiritual culture to the post-modern American world of today, that Christ is the Lord.

Reappropriation Of The Traditions Of Jesus Christ

Doing theology is a way of following Jesus. We follow Jesus as a community of believers, a community built on a tradition. In order to do local theology we have to reappropriate the tradition of our community. This is a challenging task because there is a series of little traditions rather than one great tradition.⁷²

Doing theology is a way of following Jesus that is an evolving thing but not an end in itself. It is a way of following and imitating Jesus' methodical way of doing theology that serves the kingdom of God but not the kingdom of cultural tradition. Even though theology does not exist in the absolute abstinence from human's culture and tradition, yet it focuses very much on the human's relationship to God and to one another than to a particular tradition. Theology is supposed to be characterized by the services it renders to humanity and the kingdom of God than its allegiance to a particular tradition.

"There is a long and rather confusing tradition that provides the foundations for our theologies. This tradition has given birth to many concepts and ideas, some of which seem difficult and hard to understand."⁷³ Christ Apostolic Church is not an exception in this regard; her theologies are strongly rooted in a very rich tradition, from where she developed many of her innovative concepts and ideas. Christ Apostolic church, for

⁷² Sedmak, 43.

⁷³ Ibid., 43.

example, was founded and has her supporting pillars grounded on fervent, tireless and ceaseless prayers. “It emerged in 1918 when Joseph B. Sadare (Esinsinade) formed a small praying group called ‘Aladura’ from among the congregation of St. Saviour’s Anglican Church at Ijebu-Ode.”⁷⁴ CAC is a very strong praying Church that teaches and encourages her members to always entrust, observe, and practise every aspect of their daily activities through prayers. The fervent prayer life that is characteristic of the church often makes members of Christ Apostolic Church to go to church several days in a week and spend countless hours praying. However, in the American culture and tradition, where the church finds itself today, the difficulty of the church members having to travel miles—unlike her members in Nigeria who live within a mile radius—to the church could pose a restraint to members’ ability to observe this unique theology of prayer. This constraint therefore, is an indication that the church is in need of a change or changes in this area. If the church could methodically shift position a bit by making use of the post-modern telecommunication technology and organize some telephone conference prayer lines that will relieve members of several visits to the church for prayer, the church, through the use of this medium, may be able to make the prayer attribute of her theology relevant in the life of her members. This attempt is not to diminish the importance, the essence and the efficacy of prayer in this already prayerless culture, but to encourage people to participate more in the church or group prayers at the convenience of their living rooms by using the twenty-first century’s technology.

⁷⁴ Alokun, 30.

Separate sitting arrangements for men and women inside the sanctuaries, is one of the many small rivers that come together in the sea of the great tradition of Christ Apostolic Church. Before this time, I personally thought that this fundamental principle of the Church that dates back to the inception of the church was a theological principle of the church to keep her members pure and holy within the context of their religious services in the church. Until recently, I remained supportive of the church's view on this issue despite numerous complaints of some members that the church should allow them to freely sit where ever they like to sit within the sanctuary. However, my findings at Christ Apostolic Church North American ministers conference in 2007 in Maryland made it clear to me that this issue is more of old historical principle than that of post-modern theological matters. Pastor Agbeja, one of the CAC North American District chairmen, who was present at the conference in 2007, explained the historical background of separation of sitting arrangements in CAC. According to his explanation, this practice in CAC dated back to the inception of the church. This practice came as a way of protecting the women of the church from being attacked spiritually, by African traditional medicine (Juju). This was because many local traditional herbalists that were then being converted to Christianity were coming to the church then, with their traditional attire—which were then believed to have been highly soaked in the native medicine. The church remains very committed to this seating arrangement even within today's post-modern contextual American culture. The church needs to somehow shift her position on this matter. She needs to care more about the inner transformation and worry less about the externality of the members. "Outer expressions of genuine 'Christ likenesses must necessarily be the

product of inner transformation.”⁷⁵ Jesus Christ did not applaud the externals—the religious leaders of his day, but cherished the outflow of a heart that has been transformed inside out by the spirit. Jesus rebuked and likened the externals to the Pharisees:

Woe unto you scribes, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:27-28).

Jesus cares more about a person’s inside than his/her outside, the issue here therefore is not about how we sit or act in the sanctuary, but more of who we are within the context of our worship centres and beyond. The church therefore needs to be a character builder but not a boundary setter. This is because “if people do not experience authentic transformation, then their faith will deteriorate into a search for the boundary makers that masquerade as evidence of a change life.”⁷⁶ In the last eighty years of her inception, Christ Apostolic Church had passed through three generations; the Silent, the Boomers, and the Xers respectively. Each of these generations expresses differences in the methodology and the perspective of their theological beliefs. While the Silent generation had a very conservative but tolerant theological perspective, the boomers are more agitating and questioning in their perspective, whereas the Xers are highly radical within the context of their theological perspective. The shift in the theological perspectives of different generations is an indication for the church, the necessity to

⁷⁵ Louis Bartet, “Inside out Christian Living,” <http://www.pointage.org/sermons/05-16-04am.htm> (accessed June 16, 2008).

⁷⁶ John Ortberg, “True (and false) Transformation,” *Leadership* 23, no 3 (Summer 2002): 101-102.

modify her methods of spiritual practices (without watering down or compromising her holiness and spiritual commitments to Christ), in order to accommodate the church's different generational composition. The new generation churches in this post-modern culture permit husbands and wives, men and women to sit next to one another inside the sanctuaries, a method of convenience for members. In fact, today's culture brings men and women in close contact with one another in very many areas of life other than church sanctuaries; they come close to one another at their places of employment, in the trains, on the streets, super markets and so on, where they hug themselves, shake hands together and the like. Closeness of men and women in this format does not necessarily call for infidelity, immorality or ungodliness, but rather makes them friendlier and more caring for one another. A methodical shift in CAC's position of boundary-settings into helping the members to discern authentic transformation inside out, will not only help the church to favorably compete with the new generational churches, it will also help the church to ease her member(s) concerns—a positive approach that can foster retention of her members.

Christ Apostolic Church's views, beliefs and theological practices concerning the social engagements, are also uniquely fundamental.

CAC members are forbidden from drinking not only strong drinks such as whisky, gin, cognac and beer but even palm-wine. Also they must not chew either powdered or raw tobacco leaves (agira) or (taba); they must not smoke either ground or wrapped tobacco and cigarettes; they must not wear any form of adornments or 'aso-ebi' or become a member of non Christian society or take part in 'esusu / elele' (money lending with interest). If a member acts contrary to any of these directives, he would be

suspended for a period ranging from three to six months depending on the type of offence involved.⁷⁷

The cleanliness and the holiness of members happen to be of great concern to CAC than the pleasures of this secular world. Pastor Alokun therefore wrote “While many people relish in these worldly pleasures, the CAC believes that these vices are destructive to both the body and the soul of a person; that they will finally drag him to hell.”⁷⁸ To the best of my understanding, CAC today has shifted positions in some of these areas. For example CAC churches (especially the branches in the North Americas) today tend to tolerate or educate members who use ornamental decorations like jewellery, but do not get to suspend them. This tolerance has permitted the parishioners to come to Christ the way they are, without having to masquerade their real personality. Allowing members to come to Christ the way the people are, enables the church to answer questions like; what matters most to Jesus, the spiritual or the physical, the indestructible or the destructible, the immortal or the mortal body? “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt.5:8). Here is a glaring indication that Jesus cherished pureness of heart than the cleanliness of the physical body.

Do We Dare To Exclude?

Reappropriating our tradition means seeing that; enduring traditions are relevant to the contemporary world. Reappropriating idea(s) does not call for the abolition of the old traditions, but rather means the understanding and the interpretation of the key messages of the old tradition in the language of the contemporary world. As Christians

⁷⁷ Christ Apostolic Church, *Christ Apostolic Church Constitution and Doctrine*, English Edition (Ibadan, Nigeria: The General Executive Council Of Christ Apostolic Church, 1991), 42.

⁷⁸ Alokun, 312.

one important tradition that we are all obliged to cherish and emulate is the tradition of Jesus Christ. The crux of the issue is how we, on an individual basis, understand the key messages of Jesus' tradition that makes it worthy of emulation. Within the context of Jesus' tradition are: love of enemies, solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, being like children, salvation or holiness and so on. Each of these key messages from Jesus is capable of relating differently to an individual, or a group in relation to his/her or the group's tradition. That is, theologically a key message of Jesus Christ may interpret differently from local to local, and tradition to tradition within the Christian fold. For example, the concept of the key message 'salvation' from Jesus tradition means "being rescued from the ship wreck" (*soteria*) in Greek, while its connotation in Hebrew '*Yasha*' primarily signifies the possession of space and the freedom and the security that are gained by the removal of constraints. Whereas, the concept of this "freedom" in contemporary days in Nigeria, means redemption from hardship, the ability to enjoy life in its fullness in the midst of essential amenities of life; like uninterrupted power supply, quality and affordable food supply, clean public water supply and so on. However, to my children—who are second-generation Nigerian immigrants in America, salvation to them could perhaps mean freedom from peer pressure.

In a similar manner comes the question of how do I understand the key word 'being like children?' for example, how do I understand this within CAC's tradition, within my own context and within the context of CAC itself? Christ Apostolic Church has a very awesome administrative tradition that is worthy of reappropriating in order for it to be more relevant to the contemporary society and today's post-modern world.

In the tenth book of *The Laws*, Plato- in his attempt to prove the existence of God and in the context of him arguing the priority of minds and souls over matter writes:

Nearly all of them...seem to be ignorant of the nature and power of soul, especially in what relates to her origin: they do not know that she is among the first of things, and before all bodies, and is the chief author of their changes and transpositions. And if this is true, and if the soul is older than the body, must not the things that are of the soul's kindred be of necessity prior to those that pertain to body.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Benjamin Jowett, "*Laws by Plato*," <http://classics.mit.edu/plato/laws.10.x.html> (accessed June 17, 2008).

CHAPTER 4

Immigration Issue As It Touches First, Second And Third Nigerian-American Generations

Nigerian-Americans are citizens of the United States of America, whose ethnicity originated from a country in Africa, called Nigeria. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, approximately one million Nigerians have immigrated to the United States.⁸⁰ In a similar manner to their population proportion in the continent of Africa, Nigerians are the single largest contemporary African immigrant group in the United States. Their numbers rival that of the African descended immigrants from the Caribbean - Jamaica and Haiti for example. An estimated 20 million Nigerians out of about 140 million population of the country reside outside Nigeria. The majority of these people live in the United Kingdom and United States of America. Most Nigerian immigrants have come to the United States in pursuit of higher educational opportunities (undergraduate and post-graduate curricula). The greater bulk of Nigerian immigrant population have come from the West, the South and the Eastern part of Nigeria namely, the Yorubas, the Efiks, the Ibiobios and the Igbos. The economic problems and the political instability generated in the country by the regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and that of Sanni Abacha in the mid 1980s to early 1990s caused a large wave of Nigerians to immigrate into the United States.

⁸⁰ s.v. "Nigerian-American," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_american (accessed Sept 5, 2008).

A growing number of Nigerian-Americans are affluent and well educated. Many possess college degrees and have graduated with advance diplomas in engineering, law, business, and medicine from institutions like, Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Duke University, University of Pennsylvania, MIT, Stamford, Columbia and others. Today, most affluent Nigerians are concentrated in the field of medicine, many are employed in Fortune 500 companies or self-made entrepreneurs.⁸¹

Political Representation

Although, the influence and the concentration of affluent Nigerians are vivid in several job sectors; they are yet to make their influence felt in American politics. Unlike some other immigrants like Cuban Americans who are becoming more and more prominent in the American politics, Nigerian-Americans are yet to make their presence known in this field. Recently and within the last years, many Nigerian-Americans have been getting themselves seriously involved in the Nigerian politics—a place they call home, rather than throwing their weight into American politics—a place where they and their children live. In the Nigerian political realm, many of them were able to win elections and got elected as chairmen, counselors and senators, while a whole lot of them gallantly lost elections. Nigerian-Americans' low-key involvement in the politics of America is unlike the attitude of Cuban Americans who tend to be significantly very conservative politically in the United States political affairs, a situation that have invariably made them a major voting block for the Republican party (GOP) in the state of Florida. The resentfulness of many Cuban Americans of the Fidel Castro regime, the

⁸¹ s.v. "Nigerian-American"(accessed Sept 5, 2008).

unparalleled popularity of Ronald Reagan within the Cuban exile community in Florida and some other issues of Cuban/American governments' relations, made Cuban Americans supportive of the Republican Party in the United States. This scenario has earned them a strong voice and made them a community to be reckoned with in the American field of politics.

There are now four Cuban American members of the United States House of Representative and two Senators (Mel Martinez of Florida and Bob Merendez of New Jersey) in the United States Senate, as well as Cuban Secretary of Commerce, Carlos M. Gutierrez.⁸²

In 2006 for example, in the state of Florida's House of Representatives, Marco Rubio became the speaker. Eduardo Aguirre served as Vice Chairman of the Export-Import Bank of the United States in the George W. Bush administration. He was later made the Director of Immigration and Naturalization Services under the Department of Homeland security. He (Aguirre) was also in 2006 appointed as the US Ambassador to Spain by George W. Bush. Many Cuban Americans, because of their political clout in American politics today, have served in several high ranking judicial positions, as well as several high profile government jobs, including White House Chief of Staff, John H. Sununu.

While the idea of having strong ties to the home base Nigeria—a place always referred to as home by most Nigerian-Americans, is a great idea, the fact remains that, all Nigerian-Americans in the United States today, will not eventually return to Nigeria, to

⁸² s.v. "Immigration," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_American (Accessed Sept 5, 2008).

settle and permanently live there. For the advantage of the first, the second and the third generation, of the Nigerian-Americans who will permanently reside in the United States to be relevant in American society and politics, it is paramount that they emulate and follow the footsteps of communities of immigrants like that of Cuban Americans and be significantly involved in today's American politics.

Raising The Hip-hop Generation

The question of how to raise children and nurture them in the way of the Lord in today's heavily polarized hip-hop world without conforming to this world, is a genuine question agitating the mind of immigrant parents with very rich and unique religious background.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

Within the dynamics of raising the children of immigrant parents in a multi-cultural society like that of United States of America, sometimes, comes culture clash between the parents home base culture—which the parents were used to and grew up with, and the residing society's culture—which the children live in and are exposed to. The consequential result(s) sometimes generate tension at home between children and their parents and sometimes causes great tension also between the church and her young members, especially in a heavily cultured church. The text (Romans 12:1-2) speaks to and invites Christians (parents and the church in general), to deal with these tensions,

these patterns of our today's world, namely, 'the Hip-hop world', with open, transformed and renewed mind but without necessarily conforming to this world.

To faithfully engage in this quest, we must be willing to be renewed in our minds and spirits as we take a fresh look at hip-hop and the hip-hop generation. We are challenged by God to be transformed as God renews us and shows us how to be faithful while simultaneously reaching hip-hoppers.⁸³

As an immigrant parent, raising five children in a highly sophisticated and heavily multicultural New York society became for me, a personal experience of this tension. In this challenge, I had to deal with this tension with a renewed and transformed mind, without giving in to the tension itself. I had this challenge a couple of years ago, when my two eldest teenage sons came home with pierced ears. The legitimate question to me then was:

How do we deal with the culture outside the Church? Do we bring it in the Church? Do we accept hip-hop hook, line and sinker? Do we critique hip-hop? What do we do with sexism and cursing? How can we embrace and use something that makes us look so bad?⁸⁴ Having counseled and spoken to several teenagers against this practice before in the Church, I quickly and bitterly engaged my children using my favorite text:

And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife and my children, I will not go out '**free**', then his master shall bring him unto the judges, he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post, and his master shall '**bore his ear**' through with an awl, and he shall '**serve him forever**' (Exod.21:5-6).

⁸³ Ralph C Watkins, *The Gospel Remix: Reaching The Hip-Hop Generation* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2007), 1.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.

In our exegesis and walk through this text together, both my sons and I came to a unanimous agreement that the text simply means, “forever being made slave(s) to a master (an oppressor).” We both also agreed that this is not a practice that edifies Christian’s culture. No sooner that my sons apologized and promised to refrain themselves from that practice than the two of them came home again with small tattoos on their arms. In one’s arm are two little angelic symbols with inscription “my little angels Gbenga and Jumoke.”⁸⁵ While in my other son’s arm is a face-like picture with inscription, “I love Gbenga and Olajumoke.” From a devastating and broken heart came again a meeting between my two sons and myself. The first one explained his appreciation of me and my wife, for being his angels. All these he said came from good parental care worthy of emulation that we shower upon them (our children). Therefore, being very proud of this parenthood identity given to him by God, he saw no better way to express his feelings to who so ever comes across him in the course of his life, than using this post-modern and prevailing Hip-hop cultural medium (tattoo) to express his feelings. In a similar pattern, the other explained why he felt very proud to express his love for his parent proudly to the world through tattoo’s medium. Like a Yoruba adage that says, “Omo so si ni lenu o bu iyo si” meaning, the child passed out stinking gas into one mouth and simultaneously laced ones tongue with salt or sugar. The implication of this adage is as lovely as ones taste buds like to have the tasty sensation of the salt and sugar, the stinking odor of the gas mixed with this, makes it difficult to swallow. Being caught up in this predicament, I managed to express my dissatisfaction with my

⁸⁵ Gbenga is my first name while Jumoke is my wife’s first name.

children's act, not necessarily their intention but the physical tattoo itself. The African American Church has dealt with similar issues in the past. We had to deal with Thomas Dorsey and his leadership in the development of gospel music. It was Dr. Dorsey who took the feel of the blues and applied it to Church music. There was a great uproar around the song "Oh Happy Day."⁸⁶ As the church struggled with the appropriation of culture and the integrity of God's Church, so also the immigrant parents and their children are expected to struggle with the challenges of various cultural evolutions that are being generated amidst today multi cultural, post-modern society. The appropriation of these new cultural challenges and the integrity to remain faithful to the integrity of culturally rich immigrant families remains also part of the struggles. Both the parents and the children of immigrant parents in this respect need to seriously pray that popular poetic prayer for "God (to) grant me (them) the serenity to accept the things I (they) cannot change. Courage to change the things I (they) can and the wisdom to know the difference."⁸⁷

In each phase of this (musical) evolution, from Thomas Dorsey to Kirk Franklin, the African American Church has remained faithful, but we haven't shield away from asking God to help us deal with these difficult issues. What we have found is that at each phase of musical development, the church has remained true to the gospel while learning how to embrace the culture in ways that are Biblical as well as protecting the integrity of God's Church.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Watkins, *The Gospel Remix*, 2.

⁸⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Serenity Prayer," <http://www.getreadyforlove.com/Love%20Sources/godgrantmetheserenity.htm>
<http://www.getreadyforlove.com/Love%20Sources/godgrantmetheserenity.htm> (accessed Sept 14, 2008).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Despite the fact that the African-American Church⁸⁹ did not cave in easily to, or got easily swept away by any popular musical/cultural manifestations, they were critical of how God intended to use what is outside to bless and enrich things inside the Church. The African-American Church however, was simultaneously very appreciative of the advent and what the new musical culture has to offer to the body of Christ.

Out of the frustrations that are contextually embedded within the dynamics of raising children of immigrant parents in multi-cultural societies, comes the issue of “ethical patience” for both participants in this game—parents and the children of the immigrant parents. Ethical patience, according to Michael Dyson “is the ability to hear and understand popular culture on its own terms before seeking to critique it.”⁹⁰ Contextual understanding of ethical patience comes in two parts, first, the exercise—the ability to listen to the expressional information that is packed up in the culture before the engagement and secondly, the critique of the culture. The parents of the children of immigrants need to seek to listen and understand the depth and the breadth of what their offspring generation is saying about itself. With liberal mind, they need to see and understand the beauty, the pain, the truthfulness, the meaningfulness and the goodness in the messages of their offspring’ culture. At the same time, the children need to seek to listen and understand the great task of their parents’ struggles to hold on to their home base rich culture and the solid foundations upon which their ethical characteristics were built. Only after each party has heard each other’s story with truthfulness of mind can

⁸⁹ This situation was not limited to African-American Churches but cut across the entire body of Christ today; Nigerian Pentecostal Churches experienced the same.

⁹⁰ Michael E. Dyson, *Holler If You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2002), 211.

each move judiciously to the second phase that is the complete engagement and honest critique of what each has heard and understood.

“This is My Commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John.15:12). To pay obeisance to Christ’s above commandment, which is meant to address not only the body of Christ but also all her embodiment including nuclear families, the likes and the dislikes of everyone under the domain of this commandment has to be studied and be respected.

Young adults who are considered hip-hop grew up hip-hop... They grew up in a post-civil rights America... These are some of their social markers, and these young adults look at the Church asking why they should come and sit with you when they feel at best that the Church doesn’t understand them, and at worst that the Church has abandoned them.⁹¹

This hip-hop generation’s feelings about the Church are not much different from the abandonment feeling that they have about their parents. Whereas, neither the Church nor their parents hate them in the actual sense of it, but felt disgusted and disappointed, looking at the hip-hop prevailing social generational behaviors. For example:

The civil rights generation (Baby Boomers and older) had high hopes for the hip-hop generation. They wanted those following them to achieve on par with or above their own level of success. The civil rights generation fought to open doors and break down barriers to ensure the next generation’s success. When the civil rights generation sees pants hanging down, hears speakers bumping in cars... the look is disgust.⁹²

Consequently the disappointment felt here by the civil rights generation came from the genuine love that they have for their offspring (the hip-hops) to do better and be better in life. While the feelings of abandonment and frustration felt by the young adults

⁹¹ Watkins, 14.

⁹² Ibid, 13.

(the hip-hop generation) in our society or in our churches today came from the fact that they felt the adults (the civil rights generation) fail to read, understand and appreciate who they are through their own world.

Within the context of this all, comes the question to me that, if Jesus Christ were to be physically present in our world or society today, what would be his position, his advice, and his world view in all these? If he were a member of the civil rights generations or a member of hip-hop generation, what would be his reactions and messages to the other side? “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him” (1John.4:8-9). I guess, as a member of the civil rights generation, that Christ would speak to the hip-hop generation that I love you but hate those things that break my heart when you do them. The love that I have for you is a genuine and benevolent one, meaning love of good will, which is wishing you well. In the expression of this love is the reason why I want to come into your life, to explain with love that is not laced with hatred, that those things in your ways and in your behaviors that seem unreasonable, unpalatable and very offensive to me are actually breaking my heart. Therefore, 2 Peter 3:9 says “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but his long suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” At the same time from the perspective of being a member of the hip-hop generation, I believe Christ would say I associate with the hip-hop generation in the same way and for the same reasons that I did associate with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5-10). And if you—the civil right generation, love me, I want you to express it through the hip-hops. I want you to understand that they

want to be heard because they too have something to say. Also, they do not mind being mentored, but they don't want to be monitored, and like the legacy of the African Americans, they want to be free agents with great unwillingness to be bossed around. Therefore for my sake, love them the way they are, without necessarily conforming to their acts.

Children Of Immigrant Parents' Identity Issue

First generation immigrants usually love to teach and expect their children to understand and live up their cultural, traditional, and spiritual identities. From my experience within the context of the Nigerian-American community in New York, children of immigrant parents often rebel against such teachings. Their parents are usually unhappy and highly frustrated about these rebellious attitudes. I believe these children rebel against their parents' culture because they could not fully appreciate its beauties and aesthetics. Also, because they have never lived in that culture, they tend to lean very much towards the contemporary culture where they live, which they understand, and which they appreciate. To understand why these children refuse to be identified with the way and manner that their parents love them to, but seek identity elsewhere, first generation immigrants must turn to and tune into where their children are looking for a sense of identity and self-worth. In a larger context, within African American Communities in United States, the question of identity is of great importance. The sense of identity of today's youth is heavily influenced by the contemporary youth culture. "Today more and more black youths are turning to rap music, music videos,

designer clothing, popular black films, and television programs for values and identity.”⁹³

“So, if hip-hop is turning to popular culture rather than the Black church or civic organizations for identity formation, and if the elders want a glimpse of how hip-hop defines itself, the elders have to tune in, commercials, ESPN, video games, music television, and the like are defining the identity of the hip-hop nation.”⁹⁴ Tuning into the youth’s world will enable the parents to study and understand what are the elements of interest to these youths, in their world. While the parents are struggling to mould their children’s identities, incorporation of these elements of interest into the works of these children, will greatly help to facilitate the identity formation process. For example, the city youth today—the hip-hop generation, are living in a world of hyper stimulation, where they like all things to be big, loud, visual, fast, multi dimensional and colorful. “The elders tend to think about worship services as something linear and primarily auditory, with printed bulletin. This reality begins to expose the division between the generations.”⁹⁵ However, for the elders to keep the young generation in the church, at the same time for these young people to enjoy their stay in the church, the world view of the hip-hop generation in some respect (like visual communication, pragmatic and dynamic preaching styles that must be accompanied by meaningful body languages) need to be incorporated into the church services. Likewise, for immigrants to successfully pass on their identities to their offspring, parents need to teach their identities to their children,

⁹³ Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2002), xiii.

⁹⁴ Watkins, 70.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 21.

using as a medium those elements of interest that attract their children to the “city youth culture” (contemporary post-modern culture).

The Dynamics Of Raising Children Of Immigrant Parents In U.S.A.

Most Americans are Immigrants or descendants of immigrant parents that came to United States in the last two hundred years. The net migration, which is the difference between the number of people entering a geographical area and leaving it, (immigrants’) is growing geometrically in the world today. According to the population reference bureau’s data, “about 145 million people lived outside their native countries in the mid 1990s, and the numbers are increasing by anywhere from 2 million to 4 million each year.”⁹⁶ The volume of legal migration started to rise tremendously in United States starting from 1940s as opposed to that of 1930s when the lowest volume of the migration into U.S. within the century was recorded. As American women began having fewer children, immigration began to account for an increasing portion of population growth in America. Between 1980 and 1999, the volume of the immigrant’s population in America rose to double that of the previous four decades. Based on the account of the numbers of these immigrants, that of their children and grand children, the U.S. census bureau projected that the United States population will reach over 403 millions by 2050 and 36 percent of this projected growth is expected to come from immigration. The children of the immigrant parents are the fastest growing segment in the United States population

⁹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, *Percentage of U.S. Population from Migration, 1900-1999*
<http://www.prb.org/Educators/TeachersGuides/HumanPopulation/Migration.aspx?p=1> (accessed July 2, 2008).

today. “One in five children in the United States is the child of an immigrant, evidence of the demographic impact of recent rapid immigration.”⁹⁷

This issue is not limited to United States alone. In Canada for example, immigrants made up the vast majority of the 1.6 million new Canadian population between 2001 and 2006, giving the country the highest population growth rate among the G8 countries. Out of this 1.6 million new increase in the Canadian population, 1.2 million came from new immigrants while the country’s native-born population increased by 400,000.⁹⁸ Meaning that over two-thirds of Canada’s population growth in the five to seven years were fuelled by immigrant new comers, according to the 2006 census data released, “the country is on track to becoming 100 per cent dependent on immigration for growth... We’re heading towards a point where immigration will be the only source of growth in Canada.”⁹⁹ This fact is real despite Canada’s highest population growth rate among G8 nations, the country’s fertility rate is just 1.5 children per woman, a situation that is far below the 2.1 children per woman found in other G8 nations.

Despite the demographic significance of the children of the immigrant parents in the American population today, their well-being is rarely studied nor considered a subject of concern, neither on the national level nor in the policy-making platform of our nation. That is, the family environment or issues, the physical or emotional health, and access to needed services by the children of the immigrant parents, has no significant effect

⁹⁷ Harvard Graduate School of Education, “Children of Immigration,” *Harvard Educational Review*, <http://www.hepg.org/her/booknote/112> (accessed December 12, 2008).

⁹⁸ CBC News [online] “Immigration Critical to Canadian population: Census” <http://www.cbc/canada/story/2007/03/13/census-canada.html> (accessed December 12, 2008).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

nationally, in the policy making section of our government. For example, “Research has found that policies such as the 1996 welfare reform law that disadvantage non-citizen adults are felt by both foreign born and U.S. born children in immigrant families.”¹⁰⁰ In addition,

Child success in immigrant families is heavily influenced by the acculturation rate and legal status of immigrant parents...Hence policies such as welfare reform that may affect the pace of immigrant parents’ integration will be felt by native and foreign- born alike.¹⁰¹

Since the growing number of the children of immigrant parents demographically is becoming very significant in the United States population, failure to adequately provide for the physical, financial and sociological needs of this large and rising segment of the child population, by our decision makers, are resulting in a sort of emotional and psychological stretch for these children. Should these children be stretched, psychologically, they tend to blame the problem on their parents and their relationship with their parents may as a result be emotionally and psychologically affected. If the relationship between the children of immigrant parents and their parents are psychologically and emotionally strained, the tendency is that their spiritual relationship with their parents and that of their parents’ places of worship will also be strained. According to National Immigration Law Centre 2002, despite the significant restoration and re-authorization of the 1996 welfare reform in 1997 and 2002, most legal immigrants admitted into the United States after 1996 are still ineligible for welfare, public health insurance and other major federal relief benefits. Such a situation tends to financially,

¹⁰⁰Harvard, “Children of Immigration.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

socially and mentally stretch out the immigrants. Their angers and frustrations may emotionally and psychologically be reflected in their relationships and dealings with their children at home. However, whatsoever is conducive to smooth relationship between parents and their offspring will certainly engender same relationship between the children and their parents' places of worship and vice versa.

Immigrant Children's Family Income And Structure

According to the National Survey of America's Family data (NSAF), in 1998, children of immigrants live more in families with substantially lower median annual income (\$35,900) than those living in native-born families (\$46,200)¹⁰². The reason for this is partly because the parents of children of immigrants have lower employment level and receive lower wages as compared to parents of native-born children. With respect to employment, "children of immigrants are somewhat less likely than those of natives to live in families with at least one full time worker (77 percent versus 81 percent) or with two full time workers (20 percent versus 24 percent).¹⁰³ These 1998 NSAF statistics, affirm that over 52 percent of children of immigrant parents, live in families that are poorer than those composed purely of native citizen with their families income below 200 percent of Federal poverty level (FPL).

Income disparities—low wages and low employment rate, sometimes forced immigrants to keep two or three jobs in order to keep their families expenses in order. This situation makes the immigrants spend more time on their jobs than they do with

¹⁰² Harvard, "Children of Immigration," 2.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 3.

their children, a situation that invariably affects their interaction with their children that of course has impact on their children's cognitive stimulation and development.

Differences between children in immigrant and native families are modest. 85 percent of natives' children age 5 and younger are taken on outings several times per week compared with 77 percent of immigrant's children. Children of natives are slightly more likely to be read to by their parents three or more times a week (81 percent versus 70 percent). Children of immigrants are less likely than those of native to have parents engaged in social activities outside of the family. This may mean that immigrants are less able to advocate for their children in school or to navigate other complex social institutions.¹⁰⁴

Low family income of the immigrant parents may force their children (ages 15-18 years), to look for jobs more than their counterparts, in anticipation to compensate for the differences in their families' income, a situation that will substantially make them less likely to spend less time on other areas, for example, it may make them to participate less in extracurricular activities.

Children in immigrant families are also more likely than those in native families to experience economic hardship, but receive no benefits. Children of immigrants are more likely to live in families with problems affording food but receiving no food stamps (22 percent versus 16 percent) and to live in crowded housing or in families with trouble paying rent but receiving no housing assistance (24 percent versus 9 percent)."¹⁰⁵

It is not only that the above facts affect the interactive relationship and increase parental aggravations between the children of the immigrants and their parents alone. They also build up anger, resentment, and frustrations within these children in the course of their academic and social development as they see that gaps and differences exist

¹⁰⁴ Harvard, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 5.

between them and their native born counterparts. The above-mentioned financial constraints and the parental aggravation, make some immigrant parents send their teenage children to their home countries, for schooling and for moral training. The anticipation of the immigrant parents to get their children away from a highly permissive American society, where temptations beckon to them from every corner and turn them to be disrespectful, lazy, vulgar, materialistic, self-indulgent and irreligious, account for why immigrant parents send their teenage children to their home countries. This nostalgic undertaking is viewed as being risky by some schools of thought, who think that the idea makes the children live double life. Hazan Zillur Rahim, in his article published by *Pacific New Service*, argued, based on his experience in the Muslim immigrants community in America that

Some Muslim parents in America are frustrated when they see their children tempted to join gangs or experiment with drugs or drop out of school. Would they be justified in shipping them off to the old country for education as well as moral cleansing...to think that different, conservative societies will magically transform difficult children into a wholesome version of their parents is to live in a fool's paradise¹⁰⁶

I believe the success of this act is relative to individual location and experience. My experience within the Nigerian immigrants' community in the New York City proves to me that, the practice of Nigerian immigrant parents sending their teenage children to Nigeria, for education and to learn Nigerian culture and tradition, is a nostalgic undertaking, which is gaining popularity within this community today. My personal decision to send my three children to Nigeria for their high school education between

¹⁰⁶ Hasan Zillur Rahim, "News: Muslim Immigrants Weigh Risks of Sending Children 'Home'," *Pacific News Service*, http://news.pacificnews.org/news/view_article.htm, (accessed June 20, 2008).

years 2000 and 2005 indicated to me that, although this practice may have its own down side, its advantages to me over weigh its disadvantages. Recapping my experience with my third son in 2005, after he has spent his first full academic year in Nigeria, he came back to United States to spend his summer holiday. Right at the airport's lobby my son after hugging me prostrated and said to me "thank you for sending me to Nigeria, daddy." With mix feelings of surprise and happiness, I asked my son why he thought it was good for him to have gone to Nigeria, and his response was, "at least they thought about my future." Our conversation continued for days on this note and I was not only able to deduce from my son's great answers to my series of questions about his experience in Nigeria, that he is a changed person. I also witnessed positive changes in his behaviour and his character ever since. For example, before he went to Nigeria, this particular son of mine was very lazy, lethargic, and stubborn. He showed no drive to excel in his education. In fact, he was at the edge of cutting classes, as he could not get along with any teacher in his school then. Today, thank God, he is very focused on his academic challenges, very humble in his dealings with other people especially his elders and teachers and very helpful in the domestic and other vocational areas. This experience is not limited to my family alone, several families within my church community which have gone through the same experience with their teenage children, are likewise thankful to God, that they made the right decision at the right time in the life of their children. This practice, like every other thing, is not without its own down side. For example, Rahim in his argument, rightly stated that, when religious education became the only purpose of sending children to their parents' home country, as this is the case in some Muslim communities that Rahim studied, the consequential result could be negative rather than

being advantageous. Rahim pointed this out in the example of the three of the alleged London bombers who had visited, or were sent to the country of their parents (Pakistan) for religious and spiritual trainings.”¹⁰⁷ This situation could create a ‘double life syndrome’ for such children, that is, they tend to have a public and a private life. Such children in public life are normal and regular kids, whereas in their private life, they are purely religious fanatics.

Immigrant Children In The World Of Two Languages

Generally, immigrant parents are eager to share their home country’s language with their children. Some native born parents also encourage their children to be bilingual. Study shows that as an important undertaking as this endeavour is, some parents frequently have questions about how second language learning affects the reading ability, the social skill and the scholastic achievement of their children. In my personal experience within my church community, a couple of years ago, a parent fought the church authority so as to prevent the church from teaching her children in the Yoruba language (one of Nigerians’ major tribal languages), was an example of parents in this category. However, research has proved that children who are bilingual are more creative and better at solving complex problems than those who are not. Also, that the “bilinguals outperform the similar monolingual peers on both verbal and nonverbal tests of intelligence and tend to achieve higher scores on standardized tests.”¹⁰⁸ People who speak more than one language have the ability to communicate with more people, read

¹⁰⁷ Rahim, “News: Muslim Immigrants.”

¹⁰⁸ Russian Mix, “Raising Bilingual Children Isn’t Easy,” <http://www.russianmix.com/index.php> (accessed June 20, 2008).

literatures in language(s) other than their mother tongue and benefit more when they travel abroad or go to the community of those people whose language(s) they speak and understand. In this post-modern American society, where the immigrant's population is growing very rapidly, understanding a second language now gives people a competitive advantage in some job areas.

To raise these children to be bilingual is not easy for either the parents or the children of the immigrant parents. In my own personal experience within the Nigerian community in New York, I can not even count the number of times that parents have told me with frustrations that they speak to their children in their native language, but that their children refused to use the language but only respond to them in English. The reason is partly because of the fact that these children don't speak their parents' native language fluently and for them to quickly respond and relate to their parents easily without having to pick their words, will mean expressing themselves in their best language of expression, English. However, some of the reasons children of the immigrant parents are not very fluent in their parents' native language are: failure on the part of some parents to be cognizant of the fact that this is a learning process for their children, that they need to be very supportive and do extra works to encourage their children to tackle the challenge.

Parent must be diligent in helping their children to become fully proficient in their native language. Ensuring that your children use the home language is challenging and takes extra works on the part of the parents. However, the benefits are endless...Raising children to speak so many languages isn't magic.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Russian Mix, "Raising Bilingual Children."

As part of being supportive of their children undertaking this challenge, parents can organize lessons at home for their children that will cover not only the reading and the writing of the parents' native language, but also their native's history. Parents can however behold with their children by declaring speaking of their native languages only in their respective homes. However, this is the reason children whose immigrant parents' native tongue (native's *lingua Franca*) is not English, are more proficient in speaking their parents' native language than those whose parents are fluent in English speaking. Examples of these children are evidently seen among the children of the Chinese, the Spanish, and the Russian and to some extent, among the Haitian community.

Within the context of the immigrant communities, there is not enough encouragement for the children of the immigrant parents via the organization of formal vocational training centres to learn how to read, write and speak their parents' native language. Again, speaking from my experience within the Nigerian community in New York, where the Nigerian immigrant population and that of their first generation children are growing geometrically, the need for centre(s) to teach Nigerian native languages to their children is long overdue. Creation of such a learning centre will not only lighten the parents' heavy burden of teaching their native language to their children, it will enable these children to practice and speak the language among themselves—a situation that will polish and improve their proficiency in their mother's native language.

CHAPTER 5

On The Question Of Methodology

The Pizza Party

In order to familiarize our youth of 14-18 years with the progressive attempt of CAC to explore, discuss and address the youth retention matter and to raise the awareness of the youth regarding the coming event in our church—the youth interactive seminar, I organized an orientation pizza party for the youth on March 2nd 2008. To evaluate the stand of CAC youth on the research subject—youth retention—and to ensure adequate participation of every youth present at the pizza party, I prepared a questionnaire to be given out in the party. I was expecting to have about forty youths in attendance. I came into their class about 1.p.m when their Sunday session was at its peak and all attendees were expected to be in the classroom. I started the conversation about the program and the coming event in general. Despite the advertisement of the event that is running in the local newspaper and its flyers that were circulated within the church and beyond, over 80% of our children were not aware of the coming event. The sermon for the day was “Samuel’s calling by God.” The pizza party started right after the sermon and I tried to relate and tie God’s intention and God’s struggle for the continuity of His purpose and presence among the people of Israel during Samuel’s era—a situation that led God to call Samuel to service, to a similar intention and purposefulness of God within CAC adult and the young members today. I briefly spoke about CAC history from its inception and about her cultural and her religious virtues. I also spoke about our religious uniqueness

within our present geographical neighborhood. I gave a brief run down of the coming seminar's agenda and how dearly I am looking forward to all the youths to participate fully in the seminar. The following facts and observations came from the youth's responses to my verbal questions and the printed questionnaires that were given out to them:

1. In spite of the repeated announcement made, the heavily circulated flyers in the church and numerous advertisement about this program made in the local news paper, less than 20% of our youths were aware of the program and the coming Seminar. Meaning that, the system of passing information over to the young members in CAC, is faulty and therefore needs to be revisited.
2. Less than 45% of our children are pleased with the present programs that we have for them in the church. This shows that, not only does CAC have to spend lots of money yearly to run the children departments program, the children need to be consulted and be involved in the preparation and the running of these programs. Over 85% of our children are looking for a forum to discuss possible changes in their programs in the church.
3. A vivid indication that, the more we seek the children's involvement in the church's program, the more enthusiastic they are to participate. Again, the more we create audience for our children to speak out and lend helping hands in creating valuable and profitable programs for their department, the more we will learn about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction of their current programs.
4. While only about 8.5% of our children decided not come to the upcoming (the first of its kind) CAC youth/adult interactive seminar, about 51% gave precise

assurance to show up while about 40.5% are yet to make up their minds. This means that, CAC needs to relate to her children in a manner that will arouse their interest to attend programs of this nature.

5. Over 65% of CAC children understood and preferred an interactive seminar as a medium to discuss youth's matters. It means that organization of an interactive Seminar or open forum will make our children speak their minds to us.

I gave out 61 questionnaires and got 58 back—a 95.1% return rate. This overwhelming positive return rate and great responses that came from these children in this regard indicated the strong desire of CAC children to discuss matters relating to their department in the church and their willingness to render their help wherever they are needed.

I chose to use questionnaires to ask some questions instead of an oral interview because many CAC children prefer to remain anonymous while speaking their true minds rather than being pointed at, scolded by the adults or being reported to their parents. Therefore, through these questionnaires I hopefully provided a venue that will help the children to answer freely and honestly.

Some of the comments and questions asked by the children, towards the end of the Pizza Party when I asked them for comments and questions are:

- We are having a seminar about changes, when are we going to see the changes happening in this church? Meaning that talking about changes is not good enough as to effecting the changes.
- Is the seminar going to start exactly at 9:00 clock as indicated in the flyers? Which means that, our children are tired of us starting events late in CAC.

- Why not have the seminar on Sunday?
- What is the dress code allowed for the seminar? Meaning that, our children are quite in tune with and very sensitive to CAC strict dress code.
- Are other activities like singing incorporated in the Seminar's agenda? (A vivid indication that, our children are living in an action packed and graphic world.) Their attention span, therefore, is limited and they may be easily bored by marathon speech making.

Based on the responses that I had from the children at the pizza party, I quickly met with my site team members and designed the agenda for the youth interactive seminar scheduled for March 1, 2008. We concluded that not only would the adults attending the youth interactive seminar be observers; the entire program should be run by the youth. We agreed to appoint three youth (two males Seun Awe, Bola Omotade, and a female, Ayomide Okusanya) to be the moderators for the program. I sent out about twenty-eight printed invitations to Nigerian immigrant churches. I followed up the invitations with telephone calls to the churches. A member of my site team, Mrs. Okunnubi helped to compile the names, addresses, the telephone numbers and the names of the senior Pastors for Nigerian immigrant churches in five boroughs (Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, Bronx and Staten Island). I invited twelve young adults, 18 years and over, to be workshop groups facilitators. I met with each one of them on a one-to-one basis seeking his/her support to attend and lead a workshop's group. My site team and I designed the agenda for the program, the duties of the group facilitators and the guidelines for the workshop session. In my plaintive appeal to our young adults requesting them to help spreading the news among their colleagues, Miss Ayomide

Okunsanya volunteered to post the information and the flyer of the program on the YouTube web site and she did.

The Youth Interactive Conference (March 15th 2008)

The site team and I were expecting about forty to fifty people to attend, although Dr. Oyedeji, the assembly Pastor and our spiritual father, instructed us to project and make food preparation for one hundred and fifty people; we had a turn out of about one hundred and ninety to two hundred people. We had representatives from other Christ Apostolic churches, The Apostolic church and the Celestial church of Christ. The first set of questionnaires was distributed shortly before the guest speaker's (Mrs. Adetutu) speech.

Guest Speaker's Speech

Mrs. Olu Adetutu, a renowned educator and children's counselor, from CAC Tampa Florida was the Guest Speaker. She spoke about her love for children and CAC's desire to meet her youth's needs as one of the reasons for holding this conference. She spoke briefly about her life history, how her strong desire for fashion and her love to wear pants ran contrary to CAC dress code. Growing up as a youth, she saw that her parents failed to understand her struggle, but spoke about how her father finally helped her to solve the problem as a generational issue. Like a cycle, she said, every generation struggles with this issue. Speaking on the title of this project "*The heritage of the Lord*," she said, while prayerfully preparing for the program, the Lord revealed to her the necessity for the children to be rooted in the three following key areas:

A. Spiritual Heritage

B. Cultural heritage

C. Heritage within C A C

You have to know that we are rooted in three key areas, if you are rooted and you understand your stand in the three key areas, it is easy for you to make decision and understand where you are positioned in the midst of numerous generational conflicts in our world today.¹¹⁰

Spiritual Heritage

As believers, we are perfect work from a perfect God, for a perfect purpose on this earth. “Our heritage in Christ Jesus comes and begins from God who spoke the Word and the World came to being,” she said. Quoting Jer.1:5 “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou came forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nation.” She explained that our spiritual heritage that is rooted from God began before we were born and this is the strongest and the most powerful heritage that we have. Our spiritual heritage therefore, is grounded and rooted in the omnipotent God who is Spirit. Human being is made up of the physical and the spiritual components. The physical component—the destructible, was made from earth and will eventually return to the earth, while the spiritual component was inherited from God, when in Gen. 2:7, God breathed the breath of life into the dust and man became a living being. She advised that, to be saved from running into many problems in life, the spiritual heritage has to be properly grounded on the solid foundation that is Jesus Christ.

¹¹⁰ Mrs. Olu Adetutu, speech given at CAC Youth Seminar, Brooklyn, New York, March 15, 2008.

She mentioned some biblical characters like Moses—who parted the Red Sea, David—who defeated Goliath, and Daniel—who conquered the Lion, as our spiritual giants. These Biblical characters she explained, are embodiments of our Spiritual heritage worthy of emulation and in them we need to be very proud. Using Matt 5:13-14 “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, where with shall it be salted? It is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” Children are hereby likened to salt that is a very important preservative substance. Children therefore are the preservers of the word of God on earth. Since this world cannot afford to be without the word of God, hence it falls into a terrible state of commotion; the children therefore are given that rare opportunity to maintain the peace of the Lord on earth by way of preserving God’s living word on earth. The gifted power of salt is in its savor. If the salt losses the savor or whenever it fails to properly put it to use, the salt invariably will be rendered worthless. In a similar manner, the beauty of this preservative power given to children by God—to protect and preserve God’s word on earth, will be worthless and meaningless if the children fail to swiftly discharge this uncommon role given to them by God.

Cultural Heritage

“Your background, your tradition, your birthright, your culture, your custom, your fashion are all the bedrocks of your cultural heritage” said Mrs. Adetutu. Meaning that the hair type(s), the dressing styles, the diet, and the traditions are the cultural birthright of the immigrant children inherited from their parents. These are the cultural traditions of immigrants that were brought with them all the way from their home land(s) into their country of residence (Nigeria and USA respectively in the course of this discursion). These cultural traditions, the Yoruba African heritage for example, set the immigrants apart from their community of residence and invariably make their children extraordinary. ‘You are special people because you can trace your generation’ said Mrs. Adetutu. Although, cultural inheritance is free, it is a special grace for offspring to have an opportunity to trace their generation. This is because many people in our world today cannot trace their tradition, their heritage and their generation.

Mrs. Adetutu stretched further the essence of CAC youths holding tight to their cultural heritage as she said “your cultural inheritance is free (however) if you divorce yourself from your inheritance, your cultural inheritance, you are divorcing yourself away from the large scene.” An adage says that; “People don’t value what they have until they lose it.” Cultural inheritance is part of the basic foundation of every immigrant’s offspring and this is rooted in him/her right from birth. She explained that the youth’s parents have laid the foundation of this cultural heritage. To build on it and to build on it is now left to the youth to decide. She pointed out that the primary problem that immigrant parents often have with their children, either in communication or expectations, is through the culture. For example, the Yoruba customary dressing mode disapproves excessive body exposure, most especially for women. Due to this cultural

background, many Nigerian immigrants (parents) who are living in USA frown seriously against their children dressing in too short or revealing clothing.

The Heritage within CAC

The speaker was not able to speak much on this area because we were running out of time. However, she pointed out to the youths that they have the obligation to take CAC to higher level, all because the church belongs to them and they own the church. CAC is the religious root of these children—a place where their religious journey began. It is their responsibility to cherish it and strive hard to uphold her dignity and continuous existence in the Diaspora.

The Workshop Session

After the guest speaker spoke, we broke up into small groups. All the young adults, ages eighteen and above, were in one group. The remaining teenagers were divided into four groups, while all the parents were separately grouped together into a group. Each group was presided over by at least two facilitators, while the guest speaker engaged the parents' group. I had tutored the facilitators before this time and I have given each one of them written guidelines for the workshop session and the duties of the group facilitators. Each group was asked to come up with at least three questions and three suggestions for the church. Unfortunately, one of the young adults—Seun Awe, who collected the written questions and suggestions, had requested my permission to take them home to collate, never returned them to me. However, the following are some of the statements made by some young adults, quoted exactly in their own words. I extracted these statements from the video recording of the program.

1. “I think why they do everything by force is because that’s how they were brought up and they just think its going to work like that...it is a totally

different culture...a child is going to be a child no matter what...they don't understand that we are in a separate society."

2. "This is something I think we can tell our pastors; I think a lot of the sermons get very repetitive. I am here every Sunday and get to listen to this, it's the same and that is when I get bored...talk to me about things that relate to me...I watch Joel Osteen...don't talk to me about things that I will never experience in my life."
3. "My point is the fault is not all about the pastors think about you come to church, I sit in the church and the people in the church don't take it serious...so wonder why some kids don't take church serious? Because their parents don't take church serious."
4. "I guess we should never make the mistake...don't focus too much on the messenger rather on the message. It doesn't matter if it is coming from someone older than us or somebody our age, it is the message they are saying...We decided not to listen; we don't have to decide not to listen."
5. "They gave birth to us here, we were raised here, so the way they do their things we are trying to adapt to, then again we are not used to it. We are used to where we are right now, so they have to sort of adapt to us in a slight way to keep us here."
6. "When we work with the adults in the church, for example, I work in the computer room, there's always power issue like 'I am older than you and I

am telling you what to do, and not what you want to do. Don't think that I don't know what I am doing.' And he basically doesn't know what he is doing you know. We understand more about computers than most of the parents anyway."

After the program other members of the site team and I had a wonderful discussion session with some of the youth in one-on-one interviews. One of the comments that I had received from one of the young adults that had left the church but came for this program was

Things like this didn't happen in our time, now if the church is ready to listen and wants us back; I am more than ready to come back to the church...The people at the church where I am now understand my virtue, they know is like gold, they are ready to pay any amount for it, but now that I see that my home base needs me, I am ready to come back home if the church will accept me back.

I gave him a hug and told him that the church will highly appreciate him coming back home. He also told me that the church where he was at that time has sent him three times to South Africa to do missionary work and each time he preached in South Africa, he ministered to over one thousand people.

Again after the program, I sent out e-mail to all the young adults that came to the seminar and requested each one of them to please send e-mail to me commenting on:

1. What is good about the seminar?
2. What is bad about the seminar?
3. What is it that you expected to hear/see that you did not hear/see in the seminar?

4. What is it that you did not expect to hear/see that you actually heard/saw in the seminar?

The following statements are some of the responses that I got and I am putting them exactly in the words of their senders.

1. I think the seminar was a good start, we cannot stop there we have to keep going until we see a difference or a change. I have been talking to some of the children that attended the seminar and they enjoyed it but they are also waiting for something else to happen when we do have another seminar I think we should make sure that the active control group is present to make the seminar or the experiment more accurate.
2. I think the seminar was very good and successful in the sense that it went according to plan without any hitch. However, the REAL success will have to be seen in the future...I was very proud of the children who spoke their minds and had very good ideas...There was not any noticeable thing that was bad. If I could change anything, I would say that more time be spent with open discussion. Perhaps we spent too much time on other things but towards the end, the parents were excited to be heard and the children were also excited to be heard. However we did not have enough time to accommodate them all. Also I think some people were upset because they were unable to get answers for some of their questions they posed. For instance, a good question which I also felt should have been answered is “why is it that in this particular CAC men and women are seated separately whereas in other CAC churches they sit together?” I think this is very relevant because if you want to bring a friend who is an outsider and of the opposite sex, you will not bring them because you know that they won’t be able to sit with you and you may want to explain some of the cultural things that they are going to witness. So that would deter you from inviting outsiders.
3. The seminar was good because it gave the youths a chance to speak their minds...I also like the fact that the adults were able to have their own session to discuss the issue. It was too early in the morning and unfortunately as a result many people did not make it to the event in time to hear the wonderful speaker talk. Also, I noticed that some of the youth, especially the late comers felt that they needed more time to talk about the issue than the time that were actually given. I did not expect the parents to be so involved, but it was nice to see that they were excited to be there.

4. The attendance was phenomenal. It showed that parents and youths were interested in talking about the issue...The guest speaker was knowledgeable about the topic...Kudos to the drama group, it drove the point home without too much explanation...There were questions that were not answered...Other churches that came, we should hear from them and what they were doing to retain their youths. It looks like CAC (1st in the Americas) personalizes the whole program...The turnout was very large; the youths were not shy to express themselves even in the presence of their parents.
5. The feedback and attendance of some of our youths (at morning service) on Sunday after the seminar speaks for itself...The youths are looking up for immediate changes, not a prolonged one, because...they asked the church leaders, parents and our dear pastors for a commitment to change.

The Drama

The children acted several plays among which was one that was very revealing of their cries to the adult members and to the authority of CAC for help in solving the problem of why young people disappear from CAC.

In this play, three people respectively acted as:

(A) A completely black faced character

This character had his face heavily painted in black color; he was very embittered and saw no reason for him to come back to CAC because

- i. He was only being forced to come to CAC ever since he has been coming anyway.
- ii. Seating down in the church's annex was all about doing the same thing over and over every Sunday.
- iii. Except to talk to his friends, he saw no reason for him to come back to CAC, while College to him was an opportunity to explore new things and to escape being forced to come to church.

(B) A completely White faced character

This character has her face painted all in white color. She maintained she has the following reasons to come to CAC

- i. CAC is a second home to her; she loves the people, the children and the church's yearly activities.
- ii. CAC brings her pleasure and makes her a better person by instilling the fear of God in her.
- iii. To her, home is where the heart is and CAC is her home.

(C) A character with two faces (white & black)

This character came in white apparel, she had half of her face painted white and the other painted black. She spoke very softly and knelt down as she made her points that to me gingered the following pertinent questions

- i. What would the future of this church be when we have our children feeling like they don't have reason to come to church?
- ii. What does the future of CAC hold when we give our children reasons to feel like they are not a vital part of the church?
- iii. Are we ready to incorporate our children into our future plans?
- iv. Is CAC going to sit down and continue to procrastinate about what to do and step to take to solve this problem?

My personal reflections on this play

CAC to me cannot hear her children louder and clearer than it happened in these children's plaintive appeal to be allowed to get involved and be incorporated in CAC activities. The church should applaud the directness and the openness of her youth in this regard, as a wake up call to solving the problem of youth retention in CAC "Young

people see their directness as an asset.”¹¹¹ I presume that CAC authority would not be offended by the bluntness of the youth in this regard. Nor do I expect adult members of CAC to see this act as being overboard on the part of the youths in relation to their agitations. I think both the church authority and the adult members should welcome the boldness of our children to speak out in this manner.

Some older managers complain that young people are too blunt. These managers say that young employees ask for instant feedback that’s straightforward and uncomplicated and give it in return. Some managers are surprised at young people’s willingness to critique the performance of older people—it’s a combination of the eroding respect for authority and the compulsive honesty of the young generation. I feel like the Xers are so in your face.¹¹²

The church of God should bear in mind that in the world of today, the sociological demands and the philosophical expectations of the Xers generation from the church authority and the adult members of the church are not different from the demands from the financial world. That is, the same way that the Xers of today critique the leaders (managers, supervisors, and so forth) in their secular jobs, and in their bluntness expect these leaders to provide direct but not complicated answers to their heart troubling questions. In the same manner, these Xers expect the church, the adult members of the church, and their parents to provide straightforward answers to their numerous challenges in life. However, I think both the parents and the church of God should not see the Xers bluntness in this regard as a gross disrespect to the elders’ authority, rather, as a reflection of the honesty of the Xers’ generation.

¹¹¹ Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today’s Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 39.

¹¹² Ibid.

Reflections of Sunday March 16 English Service

At the English service on Sunday March 16, 2008 (a day after the seminar) right in the middle of the English service, I noticed that some of our young adults, who have left the church years ago, came into the service. I gave them an altar call at the close of the service. They were twelve in number and I asked the entire church to pray for them. Surprisingly, I noticed that one of our Deaconesses was in tears. She is the mother of two of these young people. One of these children of hers has left the church for about eight years. She told me she was in tears because that Sunday morning, the children helped her into her car while she was coming to church without telling her their intention to come to CAC that Sunday. These young people openly promised to come back to CAC and they have been very regular in our services ever since.

I summoned all these young fellows to a brief meeting at the church annex after the service and encouraged them to continue to meet every Sunday about the same time. The purpose of their meeting I explained is for them to be the helping hands, the ears, the eyes and the mouth of the church in the children's department. I also encouraged them to discuss in their meeting the needs of the children's department, the youths expectation from the church, their grievances and the ways to move forward regarding the retention and succession issues in our church. These young fellows have been doing fantastic jobs within the youth's department of our church ever since. They have literally taken over the running of the youth department in the church. They have moved the department to a higher level they are connecting very well with the children, they minister to them every Sunday and the children also feel very comfortable to relate to them. They have sort of taken over completely the running of our youth department. They have organized many

programs for the youth among which was a very successful retreat they had in August 2008.

I met severally with my site team after the successful youth interactive seminar to plan the next stage of the program—the adult interactive seminar. The church put advertisement in the newspaper. I printed flyers and with the help of members of my site team, the flyers were distributed in the church and in some Nigerian stores. I sent out invitations to about twenty-eight Nigerian immigrant churches and followed up the invitations with telephone calls. I prepared the guidelines for the workshop session and invited some members to be workshop facilitators.

Adult's Interactive Seminar

The site team and I decided to have two members of the site team speak at the seminar. One person will speak on the retention of the youths in churches. The second fellow will do reflection of the Youth's seminar that we had in our church on March 15, 2008. We will break into small groups for the workshop after the second speaker. I provided the research materials for the speakers. The first set of survey was passed around before the first speaker.

First Speaker—Deacon Adeyinka

The speaker maintained that youth retention is a general problem in all churches and that there is no magic solution to the problem, except for a complete transformation between the concerned parties (the youths, the adults and the church authorities in general). To buttress this point he gave the following statistics: 85% of youths raised in evangelical and theological churches in America stop attending churches in their late teens and early 20's. Youth spend average of thirty-five to thirty-five hours per week in the schools where they are being taught secular humanism, evolutionary and post-modern

consumerism. On the contrary, youths spend two to three hours in the church per week to have Biblical/Christian education. The church therefore is in a tight competition. More than two-thirds of all young adults who attend a protestant church stopped attending church regularly for at least a year between ages of 18 and 22.¹¹³

In the course of this program and while preparing for this lecture, Deacon Adeyinka said he interviewed some youths at CAC for their viewpoints regarding their relationship to their church (CAC). The followings are the points and concerns that he reported to have been gathered:

- They have a limited role in church administration and planning.
- They do not believe that they are important to the church: their viewpoints are not being listened to.
- It is very difficult to get older folks in the church to see beyond their generation.
- Church adults are merely being authoritative—just do what I say not what I do.
- The church programs are difficult to modify because the church leaders hold on tenaciously to their original tradition, liturgical teaching, Biblical beliefs and interpretation.

He also reported that the youths posed the following questions to him:

- Why women cannot wear pants to church?
- Why women must cover their heads in the church?
- Why gender separation (within CAC seating arrangement in the church?)
- Why are the church services not conducted in language that youths can hear and comprehend?

¹¹³ The World From Our Window, “Viewing The World Through The Window Of The Historic, Reformed, Baptist Faith”, *World from our World Blog*, <http://theworldfrommywindow.blogspot.com/2006/08/surver-question-why-are-teens-leaving>, (accessed May 28, 2008).

He said in conclusion that youth and young adult Christians are spiritually hungry for Jesus, and just because they are resistant to traditional exhortation about their behavior does not mean that they are indifferent to spiritual things. Many of them, he declared, are earnestly seeking spiritual growth and want to know how to be friends with Jesus Christ. To buttress his point he cited some researchers who have investigated why young adults/youths fail to attend their parent's churches. The following are some of the works that he cited:

- Disconnection of the teens with their church activities and failure of the church authority/adult members slowing down to answer the teens questions without the latter being scolded for being wrong to ask the question.
- Failure to clearly address the relationships of the content of the gospel to the cultural setting in which they exist, this however is not a direct criticism of conservative and fundamental churches cultures, but an awakening statement for post-modern churches to be cognizance of the surrounding culture in their methodological and message approach to their teens.

Again, Deacon Adeyinka concluded that the way to move forward to solving the retention problem in CAC includes but not limited to, the following suggestions:

- Efforts to continue to raise awareness of the adults and the church leaders of CAC about the imminent dangers that face the church (CAC) of tomorrow if nothing is done to resolve this problem.
- Efforts to continue to raise the awareness of the youths/young adults of CAC about the rich religious tradition existing now at their disposal.
- CAC authority should strive to design programs that will foster better understanding, mutual respect, peaceful relationship and unconditional LOVE between the older and the younger generations of CAC.

Second Speaker—Mrs. Okunnubi

The second speaker, Mrs. Remi Okunnubi, presented the reflections of the questionnaires that were given out at the youth's interactive seminar held on March 15'

2008. She used very colorful and self-explanatory pie charts and stressed the need to appoint youths as church workers. Given her youthful experience in her church back in Nigeria where she was appointed as usher and she was assigned a mentor. She maintained that all these opportunities helped her then to stay in the church.

The Workshop Session

We broke into three groups and put all the young adults that attended together into the fourth group. Each group was presided over by at least two facilitators. I had previously tutored these facilitators and gave to them written duties of the group facilitators and the guidelines for the workshop session. Some of the questions and suggestions raised in the workshop session include but are not limited to the following:

1. That since the attendance of the adult members of the church in this seminar was very poor compared to that of the young adult's attendance of March 15, 2008 youth's seminar, this program "*Youth Retention*" should therefore be brought to the adults of the church on Sundays, in a way to encourage their fuller participation in the program. This is because "if mountain fails to go to Solomon then Solomon might as well goes to the mountain."
2. The behavior of the adult members of the church towards the young fellow should be more welcoming. Young people with tattoos, braided hair, pierce ears should not be branded or ostracized, rather they should be welcomed with love of Christ.
3. Appointment of a youth Pastor who will break the gospel down to the young adult's level and speaks their language is highly recommended.

4. Parent/adult members of the church should be role models for the young adults, while the church needs to be more inclusive and starts to include young adult's opinions/suggestions in programs of the church.
5. Some young adults, who have come back to the church because of the good effects of the March 15, 2008 youth seminar, should be very welcomed and be well engaged in various activities of the church so as to retain them back in the church. The rigidity of the church in several areas of her policymaking and practices should be reduced while the church should be cognizant of the fact that these children/young adults are living in two worlds (the American and the Nigerian worlds). The church must not discourage nor disappoint these young people again.

The following are questions that were raised and I am putting them in the exact words:

- a) What has been the improvement/achievement in the church since we had youths /adult interactive seminar in March?
- b) What is the church doing to reach out to the young adults whenever they stop coming to the church?
- c) Why the church doesn't establish new branches?
- d) Why the church doesn't have house fellowships?

The second set of the survey was then given out and collected.

Behold They Are Coming Back

The advent of this program has raised lots of awareness among the adults and the young members of CAC about the love that they have for one another. In the midst of several differences that exist between them now is rooted the strong love for the young members of CAC. “We want to see them do better and be better. We love them, and now we must put that love in action as we get to know them a little better so that we can come to understand their behavior and better relate to them.”¹¹⁴ The expression of this genuine love from the authority of CAC and the adults members of the church, has engendered the return of some of the young members of the church, who have long deserted the church, to come back now to the church. The following reflections are from three of those young fellows who have not only come back to the church, but have literally taken over the CAC youth department, and are working very hard to move the department to a higher level.

1. Adekunmi Browne’s Self Reflection:

When I look back over my life and I think things over, I can truly say that I have been blessed, I have a testimony. Christ Apostolic Church First in the Americas (CAC) is where I was born. The Pastor of the Church, Reverend Oyedeki held me in his hand when I was about one month old and performed my naming ceremony. From that point on I became a member of the Church. At the age of nineteen all my friends had left the Church and there were no programs at that time geared towards the youth. My next decision was to move on to another church that would cater for my need.

I left for seven years and in that time I was blessed to learn a lot about ministry and to also serve in various ministerial capacities. On March 15, my father who is also a pastor at CAC told me about a very important meeting that was being held in the Church that day and insisted I attend. When I got to the Church I was surprised to see all the young people I had attended Church with many years ago. They had all returned because they wanted to see a change in the youth program. The point of this meeting was to give the young people an opportunity to voice their opinions about what they expect from the

¹¹⁴ Watkins, 13.

Church. I must say that this meeting brought a great change to my mind because I saw that I could be useful in my old Church.

From that point I started to attend the Church and work with the youth. I must say there has been a tremendous change. The leaders of the Church have given us the freedom to express ourselves in worship every Sunday in a way that is less cultural and more befitting for young people. In the short time, I and two other young people that God has sent back to the church (Brother Bola Omotade and Sister Ayomide Okusanya), have worked together like a team to bring forth the word of God every Sunday to the youths of CAC. We have also planned a retreat that beard fruit in the lives of our youths. There have been so many changes, it is very hard to name them all, but the real proof comes from the youths and their reactions to the word of God on Sundays. Getting to see them grow in the lord and seeing the change in them is remarkable. When I was a teenager there was a lot I looked for but didn't find in the Church, so I had to look elsewhere. Hopefully God will help us to be affective so none of the youth feel like they have to leave the Church to find God elsewhere. Special honor goes to Pastor Famojuro and the board of Pastors for seeing that there was a problem in our youth program at CAC and calling attention to it. May the good lord continue to help us all and give us wisdom to operate his ministry in his likeness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

2. Bola Omotade's Self-Reflection:

In 28 years of my life I have experienced so many things and I felt as if I was blessed in many ways. At that age I have been blessed with academic opportunities, which include my pursuit of a masters' degree, I have been afforded the opportunity to travel the world, I have been blessed with good heath, great friends and an awesome family. All of these are testimonies to the wonders that God has provided for me. I felt as long as I had a personal relationship with God, my place in Heaven would be secured. Prior to one of the biggest days of my life, which was the day I was involved in the Youth interactive seminar for CAC Church first in the Americas, I felt my relationship with God was good but it could be improved. My mother told me about the event and I was reluctant to be a part of it because I felt that CAC, which is the church that I was practically born in, was never going to change from its old ways. I felt the church was one big fashion show and the youth of the church were like minions. I would periodically come back to church to let people know I was still alive and also to give words of advise or encouragement to the youth. I felt that my presence, which was once every few months, was enough to satisfy my call of duty. But by the grace of God, my mother was very persistent and always wanted me to come back to church regularly. So I agreed to participate in the youth seminar and it was a huge success. To this day I remember vividly the conversations, the concerns as well as the impact of the day and its festivities. On that day, God's plans for me were revealed and he put a pressure on my heart. Today, that pressure is removed and it is filled with the joy of doing God's work

After the Youth Interactive Seminar I made a commitment to be more involved in the Church, specifically the youth/ young adult department. Prior to the seminar, the department was being run by Deacon Ilori, Deacon Ajimati, Mrs. Olowofela as well as Miss. Ayomide Okusanya who have done an excellent job in teaching the youth and doing God's work. Since the seminar I have seen great changes. With the addition of me

and my good friend and Minister Kunmi Browne, the department has added new voices and experiences. One of the first things that the leaders did was conduct a survey to see what the youth was missing, what they liked as well as what they needed. We wanted the youth to experience an actual church service and God has worked his wonders through the leaders in providing this. I have seen changes in maturity as well as seriousness of the youth who now have a greater desire to get to know God. We now have actual sermons and we allow the youth to be more active in the daily functions of our service. I have noticed a lot of the older young adults coming back to church and getting interested. I have noticed more outsiders as well as people from the big church coming to out services. The Lord has been taking control of the things in my life as well as the things I talk to the youth about. There are so many great changes that I have noticed within the last few months and by the grace of God these things will continue tenfold.

I have been thinking deeply about the next level in which I would like for the youth ministry to go and I think it is best to leave that to God. On a personal level I expect that the youth ministry will make a great name for itself. People around New York City will have heard of CAC church and speak greatly of it. I expect that we will grow sharply and be able to retain our youth and will need a larger place to hold our services. I expect the youth to take a desire in serving God and will be even more active in the church. I also expect the leaders to be able to update the church through the works of the youth ministry.

3. Ayomide Okusanya's Self-Reflection:

Prior to the Youth Interactive Seminar on March 15, 2008, I was heavily involved with the youth but I was by myself. I had started working with the youth for a little less than a year prior to the seminar. Although I was enjoying this experience, I was beginning to feel that there were many changes that needed to be made. From what I was told, some of the youth had offered to lead their peers during the services. However when I joined the departments, those leaders went off to college and as a result there was no real structure to the services. At that time, every week a guest speaker from the main church would come and preach to the youth. Once in a while the sermons were tailored to the youth and they gained from them. Most of the times, however, the sermons were a bit uninteresting and the youth were seen sleeping, talking, or walking out while the guests spoke. When I started participating, we would have discussion time, after the sermon, when we would focus on one topic per week. The topics ranged from peer pressure to fellowship and the youth seemed to really enjoy this aspect of the service.

Shortly after the Youth Interactive Seminar in March 15, 2008, we saw two major additions to the Youth Department—two young adults. As God will have it, Kunmi and Bola would now work along with me to change the Youth department. With the help of our Pastor Famojuro, we began to meet weekly with other young adults to discuss ideas and ways to help the youth department. Each Sunday, Kunmi, Bola, or I began to preach to the youth, focusing on a topic in which they could relate. We also took over 50 youths, on a 3-day retreat, where we focused on growing closer to God and increasing fellowship with one another. I saw some of the youths becoming more dedicated to God and building their personal relationships with God. I have seen an increase in the number of people attending our services and I have even seen some of our young adults return.

Since March, we have held two events to increase fellowship with one another. We went bowling in the summer and ice-skating in the winter. In our services, we recently started a time for the youth to share their testimonies. In general, I have seen a more enthusiastic group of youth in the department who want to come to Sunday service and learn more about God. By God's grace, I hope that this ministry will continue to grow and shall move forward. I expect to see more events that will build up the youths, bring them closer to one another, and most importantly bring them closer to God. I hope that we will be able to get involved in different programs such as Friday night bible studies/prayer services, community outreach programs; such as cloth drives, and evangelism with a focus on their peers. I also expect our retreat this year to be bigger and better than the year before. I hope to have more fellowship opportunities throughout the year, such as roller-skating, dinners, movies, and church lock-ins.

I also expect more leaders to rise up and offer their help to making this youth department move forward. I expect more of the young adults to come back, stay and share their talents with us. I want to increase pure worship in our services. I want the youths to become more comfortable with prayers and reading the bible on their own. I want the youths to feel comfortable inviting their friends to service. Eventually, I would love for us to have our Sunday services in the main sanctuary and provide transportation for those who are unable to come on their own.

CHAPTER 6

Becoming A Listening Church

It is highly imperative for the CAC (First in the America) to read the signs of the times and to the challenges posed by the Youth Ministry. This project underscores the issues that are germane to being the church in the 21st century. It seems to me that without the active involvement of its young member the CAC (First in the Americas) will lose her vibrancy and prophetic edge.

CONCLUSION

The project is a bold affirmation that the leaders of the church have realized that there are paramount challenges that the church has to grapple with in order to remain relevant and she must realize its mission in a new cultural milieu. The post-modern world poses considerable problem and prospects for Youth Ministry and mission. We cannot give up on the young members of our church.

This project has actually enabled me to have a renewed appreciation for the boldness and commitment of the young members of the church. They do not mince words when it comes to voicing their concerns and frustration. This is a very positive sign.

This project also is about

1. Practical steps to make the church prophetic, holistic and more intuitive to the needs of her members.
2. A telling testimony to the ministry of Jesus Christ.
3. A challenge to the church to “cross borders” and embrace a new vision that is very transformative and utilizes the full potentials of every member of the church.

We don’t have the luxury to exclude anyone. This project embraces an inclusive vision that is deeply rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and speaks about the heritage of the church. The challenge is how to continue to foster and contextualize this

heritage. One of the challenges of this project is how to include the voices of young members in the task of building a listening and vibrant church for the twenty-first century.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Plan Of Implementation

Goal 1

To raise the awareness of the church regarding the imminent dangers that face the Church if she continues to lose her young members 14-18 years at the present alarming rate.

Objective 1

To implement programs that will foster better understandings between the generational differences.

Strategy 1.

Organize an orientation, a get together (pizza party) for about forty children ages 14-18 years. Give out simple questionnaires for them to fill out to evaluate their stand on the research subject. Two core members of my site team will help to write, give out and collect the questionnaires.

Date

Between March 2 and March 9, 2008.

Evaluation

1. At least 3/4 of the invited children will show up.
2. At least 2/3 will be expected to complete and submit the questionnaires.
3. At least 1/3 of the attendees will be interviewed—one on one, by the core members and me after the party.

Strategy 2

Conduct a speaker workshop to consist of children 14-18yrs of age. This workshop will include the church's board of elders and young adult's ages 18-24 who are inactive members. Encourage input from the children and the young adults by giving them (a) index cards to write their questions, (b) questionnaires to fill out before and (c) the same questionnaires to fill out after the workshop. Keep the board of elders as listeners only and allow the last forty-five minutes of the session for the guest speaker to ask the children questions relating to their experience in the seminar. This workshop will be videotaped.

Date

Between March 15 and March 29, 2008.

Evaluation

1. At least, twenty children (14yrs-18yrs), ten young adults (18yrs-24yrs), five members of the board of the elders, and five members of my site team will attend.
2. At least 3/4 of the attendees will be expected to stay till the end, answer questions and complete the questionnaires. Three core members will be assigned to take attendance, take photograph and videotape.
3. At least 1/4 of the children 14-18 will be expected to answer questions at the allotted time for questions and answers.

Strategy 3

Dedicate a series of six sermons over a three-month period to 'the retention of the youths in the church'. In these sermons I will address issues such as mutual

understandings, mutual respect, peaceful relationship, and engagement of unconditional love of Christ among the people of God. I will engage Biblical passages such as John.13:34-35; Eph.6:4; Gen.18:19; Col.3:21 in the sermons to raise the awareness of the parishioners, regarding the need for behavioural reformation within the context of generational differences as it exists in our church today. The site team's core members will take the attendance, write and give out questionnaires to the parishioners to fill out during the second and fifth sermons, they will also collect the questionnaires.

Date

Between March–May 2008.

Evaluation

1. Each time a sermon is preached at least ten parishioners will be sampled for interviews by the pastors and the core members, for feedback and how the sermons have raised their awareness. These people will be requested to write down their suggested solution to the problem. I will collect all the written data.
2. At least 2/3 of the parishioners will indicate that their awareness have been raised through the questionnaires that they are expected to fill out and submit.
3. I will designate a member to videotape the sermons and one to take pictures.

Strategy 4

Organize a speaker workshop to include adults from our Church and other African Immigrant Churches in Brooklyn. The seminar will be centred on how the age, cultural, and social differences greatly play out in the disappearance of younger members from our church. It will focus on how modification of programs of the Church could foster retention of younger members. It will also be structured to allow an opportunity for questions, answers and feedback. Three members of my site team will be assigned to distribute and collect questionnaires, take attendance, collect the telephone and e-mail addresses of the attendees.

Date

Between April 5–April 19, 2008.

Evaluation

1. At least thirty people are expected to attend, 2/3 of the attendees are expected to stay to the end, answer the speaker's questions and air their own views and suggestions regarding the topic. A core member of the site team will take attendance and a designated person will videotape the session.
2. After the session at least 1/3 of the attendees will be sampled in one-to-one interviews by three core members and me. The sampled people will be requested to write down their suggestions.
3. At least 2/3 of the attendees from other churches will be contacted through e-mail or telephone for their comments and reflections about the subject of the seminar. The core members will be asked to make the contact and document the responses for me.

Goal 2

To recruit a listening group that will work with me to create a training/education retention model¹¹⁵ and to test this model by using it to train/teach children ages 14-18 years within a two-month period. The central focus of this model will be “the retention of the young people for the church of tomorrow.”

Strategy 1

My site team and I will through personal invitation invite two children 14-18 years, two young adults 18-24 years (inactive members), two children’s Sunday school teachers and three members of the church committee, to join us to hold four series of meetings for drafting of “the model of retention.” I will supply each attendee with copies of gathered materials and relevant information from at least two resources on retention (books/articles.) I will welcome relevant resource(s) from attendees also. The senior pastor and I will review the draft into final training/education model workbook for our church.

Date

Between May 3–June7, 2008.

Evaluation

1. At least 80% of the invited people will be expected to attend three out of the four meetings and the draft are expected to be completed by May 31, 2008.

¹¹⁵ “Christ Apostolic Church (First in the Americas) retention model” a workbook through which the Yoruba culture, Yoruba language and Yoruba history will be incorporated together with the Bible in the children Sunday school curriculum.

2. The finished model and the senior pastor's approval are expected to be completed by June 7, 2008.

Strategy 2

I will give orientation on how to use the approved finished product and the finished product itself to the children's (14-18 years) teachers to use to train the children every week for a two-month period of time in the church.

Date

Between June 14–August 9, 2008.

Evaluation

At least 3/4 of the teachers are expected to indicate through written summary that they understand the new workbook's goals, how to use it and accept to use the new teaching model to teach their classes every week in the church.

Strategy 3

Two core members and I will attend the children Sunday school for about thirty minutes every week as observers. The core members and I will sample at least three children and three of their teachers for interview every week.

Date

Between June 14–August 9, 2008.

Evaluation

1. About 3/4 of the teachers will at least be expected to use the new workbook to teach their classes every week in the following series: 1st. week –Yoruba culture, 2nd. Week—Yoruba History, 3rd. week—Yoruba

Language, 4th. Week—Bible and repeat the series again in the following four weeks.

2. At least 2/3 of the children interviewed are expected to indicate new learning experience about the differences and similarities of Yoruba culture, Yoruba traditions and that of the Bible. They will be asked to write down their experiences.
3. At least 3/4 of the teachers interviewed are expected to recently experience improvement in the children's behaviors, their enthusiasm, co-operation and excitement to be in the church or to stay in the Sunday school.
4. Sampled teachers/children are expected to every week experience progressive trend of improvement in teaching/learning in the children Sunday school and be expected to be willing to educate, influence and encourage their contemporaries in the church and beyond, regarding their new experiences.

Goal 3

To gain approval of the church committee to use the model of retention workbook in our church.

Objective 3

To give updated information processes on model of retention workbook and officially integrate it into our church's Sunday school teaching curriculum.

Strategy 1

The core members and two representatives from the children 14-18 years and I will present the completed “model of retention of the young members” to the church committee. Using PowerPoint, I will explain the details of the workbook to the committee, allow feedback, comments and request ratification.

Date

Between Aug.30-Sept.6, 2008.

Evaluation

1. At least 1/3 of the committee members are expected to give comments about their understanding of how the model of retention will foster future growth for the church.
2. At least 1/3 of the comments are expected to be adjustments and inputs that will be expected to be incorporated into the model.
3. At least 3/4 of the committee members are expected to support and approve the model to be used in our church.

Strategy 2

Organize a general meeting of Pastors, Elders, Deacons/Deaconesses and church workers. I will also invite representatives from other African Immigrant churches. The senior pastor will present the new “model of retention of the young members” and I will use PowerPoint to illustrate its content, its goals and how to use it to the attendees. I will request that starting Sept. 27, 2008 that the model be put to use every week, as a four year teaching workbook for our children’s 14-18 years Sunday school program/classes. The

core members and I will sample about twelve attendees including people from other churches, for interview after the presentation.

Date

Between Sept 13–Sept. 20, 2008.

Evaluation

At least 3/4 of the sampled people will be expected to explain what they learn/like about the model, they will be requested to write down their answers to questions such as what anticipated positive effect will the model have on the retention of the younger member in our church.

1. At least 3/4 of the sampled people from other churches are expected to articulate with, to positively comment and approve the model to be used/tested in their churches. They will be requested to write down their feelings also.

APPENDIX B

Ministerial Competencies

Description Of Evaluation Process

The site team gathered three times for discussion of ministerial competencies of Reverend Oluwagbemiga Famojuro. The candidate was excused from all three meetings with members all in agreement to transcribe the discussion of the meetings into a written document that would be given to the candidate. The minutes of the meetings are as follows:

New York Theological Seminary

Doctor of Ministry Program

Site Team Meeting

D. Min Student—Pastor Gbenga Famojuro

The second site team's meeting was held on Sunday January 7, 2007 at CAC (1st in the Americas) Brooklyn NY. The following members attended the meeting:

Rev. (Dr) A.A. Oyedeji

Deaconess O. Browne

Deacon O. Ilori

Elder T. Ojekunle

Evangelist S. Dare

Bro. P. Adeyinka

Mrs. Olowofela

The meeting started with prayer by Rev. (Dr) Oyedeji. Bro Adeyinka read the minutes of the last Site team meeting held on Sunday December 17th, 2006. The minute was unanimously adopted.

Evangelist Dare emphasized the meeting will focus on assessment of Pastor Famojuro's level of competencies in the following areas:

- Theologian
- Preacher/Interpreter of Sacred Text
- Worship leader
- Prophetic agent
- Leader
- Religious educator
- Counselor
- Pastor
- Spiritual leader
- Ecumenist
- Witness or Evangelist
- Administrator
- Professional

The site team was reminded to focus on the assessment on the student's roles and performances in the local ministry that is our church—CAC Brooklyn. The final task as we meet and deliberate on the competency assessment is to agree upon three competency

areas that are yet to be developed by the student. Below are the lists of qualifying words, followed by area competency with specific descriptive phrases.

- 1) **Continue**—This is the competency that this person already excels or rates as highly satisfactory in performance.
- 2) **Develop**—This is competency that this person shows strength in, but needs to hone and smooth in order to develop further or excel.
- 3) **Attention**—This points to an area where special attention is needed, especially in the light of a particular ministry in which the person is engaged. It may be that the person was never provided with an opportunity to develop competency, but it could also be that a personal characteristic (mood, temperament, commitment, or problem) interferes with the development and execution of the competency.
- 4) **Start**—This designates a competency for which a gift has been uncovered but is not been used and is an area to develop because the talent is latent.
- 5) **Skip**—This is competency that this person for some reasons should leave alone. Be sure to indicate why she or he should leave it alone.
- 6) **No Basis**—If there is no basis for assessment for this candidate, say so.

Site Team Discussion:

Theologian

The Site team agreed that Pastor Famojuro has engaged actively in biblical study and theological reflection in the context of contemporary world and that he should continue to grow and become more effective in interpreting the Word. The site team also agreed that the student has demonstrated all the attributes listed on page 5 of the New York Theological Seminary—Doctor of Ministry—Assessment of Candidate Competency. Some members of the site team have observed pastor Famojuro in the enhancing his training—Biblical studies (formal or Informal). He has a desire to continue to grow in theological studies and maintain professional vitality. The D. Min. student has obtained Master's degree in Theology and he is currently enrolled at New York Theological Seminary—Doctor of Ministry. Pastor Famojuro is familiar with Christ Apostolic Church tenets. He is also learning from our senior Pastor, Rev. (Dr.) Oyedeji.

The site team assigned “**CONTINUE**” in this area of competency assessment.

The meeting ended at 11:55am. Rev. (Dr.) Oyedeji said the closing prayer.

NOTE: NEXT SITE TEAM MEETING IS JANUARY 14TH, 2007 @ 11:00 AM.

New York Theological Seminary

Doctor of Ministry Program

Site Team Meeting

D. Min. Student—Pastor Gbenga Famojuro

The third site team meeting was held on Sunday January 14th 2007 at CAC (1st in the Americas) Brooklyn, NY. The following members attended the meeting.

Rev. (Dr) A.A. Oyedeji

Deaconess O. Browne

Deacon O. Ilori

Evangelist S. Dare

Mrs. Okunubi

Bro. P. Adeyinka

Mrs. Olowofela

The meeting started with a prayer by Deaconess Browne. The site team continues with competency assessment.

Preacher/Interpreter Of Sacred Text

The site team has observed Pastor Famojuro using appropriate language and diction when he preaches to the congregation. The site team found the student to be well organized, well prepared and uses Biblical based sermons to teach the congregation. He has demonstrated all attributes listed on page 6 of New York Theological Seminary—Doctor of Ministry—Assessment of Candidate Competency.

Members have observed him not to use profane languages whether in the church, in his house or at work. Pastor Famojuro was the pivot behind the success of a Seminar—Raising Children in Multicultural Society—organized by the Amazing Grace

Society of Christ Apostolic Church (First in the Americas), Brooklyn. The seminar was held in summer of 2006. He is the Patron of this Society and worked behind the scene to ensure the success of the seminar. The program drew both Youth and Adult speakers. As the pastor said on that day that “most of us grew up with African Culture; however, our children are growing up with American Culture. It is imperative that Parents and children understand and appreciate these diverse cultures so that we can live in harmony and happiness.”¹¹⁶ He really demonstrated the ability to address contemporary concerns and its needs effectively.

Another example where Pastor Famojuro has demonstrated his ability in the area of discipleship was when he joined Rev. Browne of CAC Brooklyn, to lead the congregation on evangelism. Rather than having service that Sunday morning in 2004, the congregation went on evangelism—knocking on neighborhood doors and spreading the word of God. It was a unique experience.

The site team assigned “**CONTINUE**” in this area of competency assessment.

Worship Leader

Pastor Famojuro is able to plan and lead the congregation. He is committed to upholding the tenets of Christ Apostolic Church-Worldwide. He is very skilled in helping worshippers move purposely through the liturgy of worship experience. The student is very skilled in interpretative and reading of sacred scriptures.

¹¹⁶ Rev. Gbenga Famojuro, “Raising Children In Multicultural Society,” Amazing Grace Society of CAC, Brooklyn, New York, Summer 2006.

Members of the site team have observed Pastor Famojuro officiating naming ceremonies (Christening.) A naming ceremony involves songs, praises, prayer, reading of the scriptures and giving the child names—names are provided by the parents. In addition to naming ceremonies, Pastor Famojuro has led people in the areas of house warming—(offering praises and prayers for new home), death in the family (consoling families and friends). There is no part of service that he cannot perform. He was the bandleader before his appointment as a Pastor and he still beats the drums. He sings and teaches congregation new songs, he preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ and serve Holy Communion to the congregation.

The site team assigned “**CONTINUE**” in this area of competency assessment.

The meeting ended at 11:55a.m. Rev (Dr.) Oyedeji said the closing prayer.

NOTE: NEXT SITE TEAM MEETING IS JANUARY 19TH, 2007 @ 6:00 PM

THIS IS FRIDAY AND IT WILL BE IN THE CHURCH’S CONFERENCE ROOM.

New York Theological Seminary

Doctor of Ministry Program

Site Team Meeting

D. Min. Student—Pastor Gbenga Famojuro

The fourth site team meeting was held on Friday January 19, 2007 at CAC (1st in the Americas) Brooklyn NY. The following members attended the meeting.

Rev. (Dr) A.A. Oyedeji

Deaconess O. Browne

Deacon O. Ilori

Evangelist S. Dare

Mrs. Okunubi

Mrs. Olowofela

Elder Ayofodun

Deacon Adeyinka has requested Mrs. Olowofela to take minutes because he will be late to this meeting. The site team reviewed the remaining areas of candidate's competency as listed below.

- Leader
- Religious Educator
- Counselor
- Pastor
- Spiritual Leader
- Ecumenist
- Witness or Evangelist

- Administrator
- Professional

The site team found that he should “**CONTINUE**” on most of these attributes. However, he needs “**DEVELOPMENT**” in the area of Leadership, Administration, and Professionalism.

Site Team Feedback: Three Competency Areas to Be Developed

1) Leadership

The site team believes that the candidate, Pastor Famojuro possesses skills required in a leader. He has demonstrated the willingness to learn from others on specific issues and on different occasions. He continues to demonstrate effective skills in facilitating opportunities in which others can flourish, as well as his willingness to listen and respond appropriately to others. The candidate respects talents and abilities of others by delegating responsibilities to capable people, while motivating them to achieve their best efforts.

The site team however would like the candidate to develop consistencies in his ability to follow through on plans. Developing effective follow-through in plans will enhance his skills in being an effective leader and better serve his congregation. Furthermore, the site team wants the candidate to develop skill in an effective delivery of constructive criticism and minimize his excessive use of diplomacy in conflict resolution. The team believes that the individuals under the candidate’s ministerial encounter will benefit more from his spiritual wisdom when effectively uses constructive criticism tactics efficiently with less subtlety.

2) **Administration**

As an administrator, the candidate is able to define and analyze tasks and problems that confront the church and the congregation. He demonstrates the capacity to develop strategies and set goals, and has ability to involve other persons in the process of decision-making. He identifies and makes use of the personal and material resources of the congregation, and the community he serves. The candidate demonstrates full understanding of group processes and dynamics and ability to work with others. He works to realize the mission of the whole through the various tasks that forms its parts, and ability to handle the details with precision and accuracy.

The candidate needs to develop skills in establishing concrete and realistic goals that is achievable with limited resources he has at his disposals. He needs to develop strategies that will enhance effective communication of his goals to others in a succinct manner. Another area that the candidate needs to develop is in establishing effective strategies that will provide tools that are necessary in evaluating achievements of set goals in order to decide the next steps and course of action.

3) **Professionalism**

The site team concurred that an integral part of ministry is professionalism and believes that the candidate demonstrate full understanding of the concept in his duties as a Pastor in our church. Attributes of one that discharge his duties as a true professional includes; dependability, openness, honesty, and good listening skills. To this degree, we believe that the candidate demonstrates adequate competency as a professional in his ministerial duties and spiritual callings. He exhibits positive professional attitudes towards self and others, appropriate professional behavior in relation to his dealings with

the congregation and others in the community and he is able to discern between professional and personal relationships while attending to both. The team, however, wants the candidate to develop strategies of evaluating his workload to determine what is “do-able”; within specific period, and what is not, and to say no to tasks when warranted. This effort will prevent personal burnout. The site team recognized the tendency of the candidate to take on multiple tasks simultaneously, and believes the ability to set personal limits and boundaries will provide benefits, both in the short and long run of his ministerial career.

The meeting ended at 8:15pm. Mrs. Okunubi said the closing prayers.

APPENDIX C

Youth Ministry Operating Manual

CAC (First In The Americas)



BASIC TRAINING WORKBOOK

Preface

It is very glaring in today's capitalist world that the parents of teenagers are hopelessly out of touch with their kid's needs because of the parent's tenacious focus on their highly demanding careers, jobs and civic duties. Parents, therefore, have little time available to get involved in the complicated lives of their children. This leaves the very important job of guiding teenagers into truth and love of Jesus Christ, absolutely in the hands of the church. The situation is a little more severe in the immigrant churches, whose immigrant members expect the church to add cultural, traditional and motherland's language trainings to their already busy and complicated programs. The church is therefore expected to assume the position of a surrogate parent in a rapidly growing youth population, which at times can be a burden, because the church gets the blame when things go wrong. The task and the purpose of this training work book is to see how the (immigrant) church and her (immigrant) adult members will cooperatively work together as a team to make a valuable emotional and spiritual investment in the lives of their teenagers.

Introduction

Although this retention manual book is designed for the Christ Apostolic Church (First in the Americas) in Brooklyn, as a tool to be used to educate both the adults and the young (teenage) members of the congregation it can also serve other churches. Bearing in mind that all the problems highlighted in this manual are not limited to Christ Apostolic Church (First in the Americas) alone, but also cut across the board of all immigrant churches and American indigenous churches alike. The suggested solutions and recommendations made in this book are carefully crafted to suit the purpose of churches that may find them useful within the context of their relationship and interaction with their young members. Having understood the fact that; those teenagers, who are the key focus points in this book, belong to Generation “Xers” and that their generational personalities, understanding and beliefs are very skeptical of things that are big and highly conservatively structured. A generation that is deeply committed to community and relational honesty, Xers are highly attracted to change; they are very uninterested in being spectators but love to actively participate in the community and every activity that surrounds their lives.

Mission Statement:

Christ Apostolic Church (First the Americas) is committed to:

- Identifying the struggles and potential of our youth
- Enhancing the presence of the youth in church activities and enabling their voices to be heard
- Recognizing the needs of the youth ministry and its purpose of bringing and keeping the youth in a strong Christian-fold so that all together, we can pursue the attainment of salvation in Jesus Christ

Goals:

The main goals of this manual are as follows:

- Identify ways to bring members back to church with a focus on the youth
- Help increase diversity in the church by attracting and inviting outsiders
- Introduction of programs which will nurture the needs of current youth members
- Identify ways to get youth involved in church functions and activities
- Help members to learn and to develop a personal relationship with God

Objectives:

There are many objectives in achieving the set goals, but the major objective will be to develop an educative manual that will help to teach the church members—adults and youth, on how to cooperatively work together on various projects that will center on understanding why the church has lost the people it has, how to bring them back as members, and how to retain those children that are presently in the church today.

SECTION I (YOUTH'S DISAPPEARANCE)

What are the likely problems that cause the youth to leave the church?

- Hypocrisy within the church especially with parents
- The problem of youth leaving churches can be attributed to the hypocrisy that youth observe in the lives of adults in the church, particularly their parents. The Bible says “For I have chosen him so that he may command his children and his house hold after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice so that they may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him” Gen. 18:19. It is common to hear parents lament “I raised my child in the church, but they wouldn’t step foot in the church now that they have grown up.” Parents would be great role models in mentoring their children, if they practice what they ask their children to practice. Parents’ relationship with their children should not be “just do what I say but not what I do.” They expect the church leaders to do their job for them and then hold animosity toward the ministers for driving their children away from the church. Too many parents are scratching their heads wondering what in the world happened to their children, while the blame lies squarely on their shoulder. The other aspect is the rigidity of the church that does not want to adapt to changes. The church has a “This is the way our forefathers have done it and we are not ready to change it, if it worked then, it should work now” approach.

Seduction by the World and its Destructive Traps

The world, especially our public school system has robbed our youth of their faith. The system has indoctrinated the children with secular humanism, evolutionary

thoughts and post-modern irrelevance all purely antithetical to Biblical Christianity. At most, children who go to church get 2 to 2-1/2 hours a week of Biblical instruction whereas they get about 35 hours a week of secular education in our public schools. Frankly speaking, why shouldn't they leave the church (for the secular world) the moment they have the opportunity to do so, since from their kindergarten they spend more time in the secular than in the spiritual world. It is now unethical to say prayer in public schools but acceptable for schools to teach sex education. Homosexual is now an acceptable gender to the degree that Bishops whom the youth regards as ministers of God now embrace the gay ideas. Television has become a pastime for our children. It is very rare to see our youths watching Christian programs because it is too boring and has little action.

Cultural Differences

Churches have failed to address the relationship of the Gospel to the cultural setting in which they exist. This is not a critique of fundamentalism or conservative church culture as a whole. To the youth, churches appear to be more concerned with defending their particular brand of church culture than they are about the message and mission of Jesus Christ. Sooner or later, these youths look around and find that they do not really understand why their churches do what they do. In these cases they would like to know that they could go to someone to have some of their questions answered. They should be able to ask questions without feeling that they (youth) are wrong for even asking the questions. For example, some indigenous churches tend to use their “lingua franca” for worship service—the youth do not understand the language, yet the church

wants them to blend. A simple analogy is to ask a Chinese person to sit and worship in a Yoruba service. (Yoruba is one of the languages spoken in Nigeria.)

The following are other differences that prevent the youth from staying in the church:

Length of Service

- Since the youth have shorter attention spans than adults, the time of the service should be considered and adjusted accordingly. The church should strive to have service on time and not keep the youth in the church more than necessary.
- Dress code: Many of the youth may feel very uncomfortable coming to church as they are, if and when a church enforces a dress code.
- Mode of service: The church needs to be cognizant of the youths' developmental background in this post-modern world and their global experience in today's world. The church should therefore make the mode of service (the language, the style, the order etc.) relevant to the teenage members' experiences in today's world.
- Generational Differences: The age of the "rite of passage," through which many youths make their first real autonomous choices and fall away into sinful practices is another reason youths leave the church. At times it seems like a lost cause to get any of the older folks in the church to see beyond their generation. They really are set in their ways and are extremely opinionated. It is rare to see an older person express understanding or willingness to compromise. It is resoundingly clear that in most cases, it is not the pastors or ministers of God that are failing to make a difference, it is the main body of the adult members of the church that fail to incorporate and organize the importance of young people. The youth have nothing to look forward to

or get excited about. They don't want to become judgmental and authoritative adults they see in the church.

Other Reasons

There are many other reasons why the youths have disappeared from the church. One major reason is the issue of relevance in the church. Many times the church teachings are not relevant to the issues the youths face today. Also the church has done a poor job of making itself relevant and tangible to the youths through music, teaching, and other activities. Churches have not challenged the youth to think for themselves and therefore have not prepared them for the challenges in the world. Another reason is the lack of biblical support for the youth group.

SECTION II (BRINGING MEMBERS BACK)

CAC Outreach Committee

This committee will consist of 4-6 people who will help to coordinate and execute the yearly activities, which are designed to get people to come back to the church. This committee will be essential in recapturing the attention of the youth who have left the church. The term of service for the committee members should be between two and three years, depending on availability of new committee members. The main goal of the outreach committee will be to get members back in the church, and we believe the powers of God will do the rest. There will also be many programs listed which will allow them to achieve their assigned goals.

CAC Youth Ministry Website Development

The Youth Ministry will be an important tool of communicating with people outside of the church. It is important that the website is appealing and current. The website should have current events, as well as the monthly and yearly calendars. It is important to utilize the current technology and outlets such as blogs or weekly bible readings. The website can display pictures from church events such as the annual picnic or annual retreat. The website will allow both church members and outsiders to see some of the wonderful things the lord has allowed the Youth Ministry to achieve. It is recommended that the website be maintained by the Youth Ministry teachers with the assistance of members or outsiders who have website development skills or trainings.

Spiritual and Technological Review

Many churches suffer loss in membership because they do not keep up with the times. CAC Youth Ministry should have a Spiritual and Technological review done

every two to three years. The purpose of this review is to make sure that the church is staying current with its theological and ecclesiastical teachings and challenges. In order to attract people back to the church and to retain those currently in the church, it is very important that the ministry is current and exciting. The technological aspect of the review serves the same purpose. The church must stay in tune with the current technology and be able to utilize those technologies. Possible technological changes are new equipments such as wireless speakers or microphones or digital bibles. Other spiritual advances could be recording sermons and allowing members who were unable to attend church to view it on the Website. This review can be done whenever a new member joins the out-reach committee.

Fellowship Program

The fellowship program is another program designed to help bring old members back to the church. The focus of this program will be to pair young adult members who have stopped coming to church on a weekly basis with current youths who have common interests. In the attempt to bring them back to the church, those members who have left the church—especially those of them who are now professionals like doctors and lawyers, could be asked or be requested to become a fellow/mentor to current teenage member(s). This is to create a sense of attachment between the current and the old church members. With the support of the youth ministry teachers, this program can lead to the development of bonds between the current church teenagers and the old members, a situation that may ultimately lead to people coming back to the church. This fellowship program will be similar to that of a Big Brother/Big Sister. The Outreach committee will identify members, contact them, and give them information about the program. It is

highly recommended that the pairs (mentors and mentees) names be listed on the Youth Ministry website. Each Youth Ministry teacher is expected to 3-4 fellows depending on the number of eligible participants and this information should also be available on the website.

Homecoming Weekend

The home coming weekend is another strategic way of getting people back to the church. It will be important not only to entertain, but also to retrieve critical information from attendees. Firstly, we would need to know their current contact information for a follow-up calls. It would be important to understand some of the reasons why they stop coming to the church. During the homecoming weekend which can be done annually or semi-annually, efforts will be made to see if some young adults who have left the church, could be involved in some of the current activities of the church such as the fellowship program. We would also like to get some form of testimony from the people who have left the church if applicable.

Prayer Sessions/ Guest Speaker

As mentioned, the main goal of the outreach committee is to get members back in the Church. It is very important for them to know the reasons why we want them back. We want them not only to see and understand the beauty of God, but we want them to understand that their place is here at CAC and that we care about them. We should offer prayer sessions which can help them with anything they are going through in life, as well as make them feel comfortable coming back to the church. Some members maybe getting married, or having children, or going through tough exams or relationships and may need prayer. It is recommended that a Senior youth teacher or Pastor provide such

prayer. We can also have some old members come back as guest speakers to share some of their stories and perhaps give guidance.

SECTION III (RETAINING THE YOUTH)

Outreach

Word of Mouth

The best promotion for church and youth groups is often by word of mouth, which may include inviting friends to the church or other activities. This task can seem a little daunting as people often have a negative perception of what church is like. A good way to get people interested is to let them know what fun events are coming up.

Advertising

This can be in the form of posters, flyers, or radio. The amounts of advertising you do depend on the funding you get. Posters could be put up in public places even given out around the neighborhood. The church can advertise youth services, social events and anything you want to invite new people to come and see.

Getting interactions between youth and the church

- Have a youth service and invite older members of the church
- Have a dinner/quiz/dance night to get everyone (youths and adults) involved.
- Form close relationships with older members by creating a ‘mentor-like situation’. There is a lot to learn from each other.
- Increase and encourage youth participation in Church services like bible readings, prayers, music groups etc. This will help form relationships as they work together.

Youth Programs

- Cooking class—to make traditional dishes (Jolof rice, moinmoin).
- Fashion class—to teach Yoruba traditional fashions.
- Community car wash day and street cleaning.
- Music class—to teach both western and traditional music and develop youth choir.
- Computer training classes.
- Theatre group
- Youth newsletter group—select a youth editor.

Proposed model structure of a typical Youth's Sunday Service Program.

- Greetings and prayer, introduce theme
- Praise Worship (Youth Choir)
- Hymnal Song
- General Prayers
- Bible Reading(s) and Theme-related interactive activity
- Sermon—A speaker to elaborate ideas.
- Tithe, Offerings, and Thanksgiving
- Split up into smaller groups for discussion
- Share ideas with whole group
- Conclusion from the speaker
- Closing Hymnal Song
- Benediction

Recommendations: How to Maintain the Youth

- Continue the youth church service.
- Promote youth leaders/speakers that understand adolescent (13-25) struggles.
- Develop a youth music ministry to serve weekly at the youth service. (Music draws youth).
- Create annual activities for the youth to look forward to. (Annual Youth Interactive Seminar, Annual Youth Retreat, Singles' Weekends/parties).
- Have a youth reunion annually. "Back from School Reunion" (This can create relationships/bonds between the youth and the church).
- Prepare a date and environment to allow youth to express their feelings in an open forum. (Adults/Youth Interactive Seminar). Example of Issues: Peer Pressure, Adults/Youths relationship in and outside the Church.
- Gear specific programs towards specific age groups (separate groups in age segments).
- Young Adult Ministry (18 -28) vs. Youth Ministry (13-17).
- Encourage youth to invite their friends to church.
- Adults must use friendly ways to communicate with the youth most especially when it comes down to correction.
- Church must recognize that the spiritual growth of the youth is more important than culture. Culture comes second to salvation.
- Have more programs dedicated to those youth that go away to school. We should recognize them every time they leave and every time they come back.
- The church needs to fix the stage in the annex, so that the youth will have a place to display their talents.
- In the near future the church must start a Friday bible study for the youth so that there is time for them to study the bible.
- Keep those youth that have left the church updated on all that is going on in the youth department.

- Adults must have a positive attitude towards any youth that has stopped coming to the church and towards those that are thinking about coming back to the church. We must “draw people back with honey.”
- We should make a monthly newsletter that updates the youth and adults on our youth’s achievements, past and present, young person of the month, and also fun events that may be coming up in the future.

Getting Youth Involved

Organizing Youth Committees

The organizing committee will be parallel to and do all the communication with the church committee. They can approach the Pastors by electing a leader who can best represent them to talk to and negotiate with church authority. This group can be made up of the older members of youth groups as well as new members.

Event Planning

To plan an event you will need:

- A location, e.g. park, hall, church
- Funding—you can get this done via fundraising or by asking the church for funding.
- Entertainment, e.g. a band, comedian, actor, activities, DJ, movie
- A group to organize the event e.g. adults, people in youth groups
- Consider what age group you are trying to attract

Support

Encouragement Ideas

Prayer Buddies

- Set up “Prayer Buddies”—Youth and church adults are paired up and can pray for one another.
- It helps youth build relationships between youth and the adults of the church, as well as bringing concerns to God.

Mentoring

- Set up a system in your church where pairs of adults and youth meet. This can be at a chosen time, preferably in a casual setting such as a café or going for coffee. Youths could speak to the adults about any of their concerns and such.
- This will help to bridge the gap between the youths and the adults in the church. It also means they can go to someone other than their parents or friends for advice.
- Suggest this to your church and encourage her to organize it for everyone. You could talk to your youth leader or go directly to general Prayer. Encourage the church members to pray for each other.

Fundraising to support youth’s activities

Concerts

- Raises money in a way that the whole church can get involved.
- Invite other members to a night of entertainment with a small entry fee.
- Include a shared supper. This could just be a few plates of traditional dishes made by youth’s cooking group.

SECTION IV (INFUSE YOUTH INTO CHURCH ACTIVITIES)

“Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth.”(Ecc.12:1.) This reading in Ecclesiastes encourages young people to practice and dwell very well in the word of God. This is the reason for our emphasis on youth participation. The direction in life chosen by the young people under our influence is very important to us. Their salvation and spiritual growth is our primary goal.

Youth-Run Service

Get a small group together as an organizing team to coordinate the youth service. They will come up with a theme for the service based on an idea, moral lesson, or bible verse. They should consider interactive activities such as drama skits, songs, and bible readings that you could creatively introduce the theme and set the environment. They would brainstorm the main points to base the service on.

The church can form a youth band, but if there are not enough interested musicians among the youth of the church, invite the church music group to help out. This will build relationships within the church between different age groups and thereby provide the opportunity to learn new ‘youth’ songs.

Suggested Recommendations

Sunday Church Services

- Once every three months, the youth should participate in adult services. We need one youth minister to lead the service and bring the messages that especially targets the concerns and the interest of this age group. The

youth will perform all the church activities for that Sunday. This participation will strengthen adult/ youth mutual respect.

- In general, the youth should be able to be called upon to read the bible scriptures during the service at any time.
- The youth should collectively visit other churches to worship with them.

Church Jobs

- The young adults should be used in different job positions such as the pastor's room or the money room. This will show them the different ways, especially behind the scenes in which the church is run. It will also give them the opportunity to learn about these positions and figure out where they can be of help.
- The youth should also be used in the children's department.
- The youth should be used in the various committees of the church such as the building committee. This may mean that they would sit in on the meetings, listening and observing how the committee works to help the church. Once in a while they may be called upon to give their opinion on a particular subject.
- The maintenance and monitoring of the bathrooms in the annex should be a job given to the youth falling between the ages of 13 and 18. It is important to note that prior to this assignment, those bathrooms must first be professionally cleaned. This is an assignment that should be rotated amongst different youths.
- In terms of the youth ushers, they should be able to do their "ushering" in the annex amongst peers. In this way, they will be able to do their job and also be able to hear and understand the preaching of the word of God. However, there still can be times when they are placed in the main

sanctuary to work for the day. It is essential to get more volunteers to usher so that all of them would be able to alternate so that the same people are not ushering from week to week. Those volunteers would of course, be recommended to Pastor Oyedeki so that he can bless them.

- In terms of the choir, one idea is to possibly start another choir group with another older person who can handle that group. It is important to note that this second choir would be in no way replace or compete with the first choir. This suggestion came out of the fact that many churches tend to have more than one choir and maybe the second choir could give a different “flavor” to the church.

Educational/Summer Activities

- Church Picnic: The youth should be continually used in the planning of the church picnic especially with activities related to the youth.
- Summer Trip: Every summer, a week youth camp/retreat activities. These will enable them in a different area to hear God’s voice; they eat, play, and worship together. The retreat will include games, sport competitions, lots of energy-demanding activities, daily chapel services, Bible learning activities, evening programs, and cabin devotional times in small groups.
- Friday nights: The youth should be involved in some sort of Bible study group on Friday nights during service. This could be all year round or just held during the summer. This will increase knowledge of the bible as well as fellowship with one another. This bible study group may be led by two people—a young adult and an older adult. The team would be responsible for organizing periodic workshops around biblical issues or a specific topic of interest.

Special Programs

- For those of certain age (18 and up or 20 and up,) there should be a society or association that fosters a relationship between all of these young adults. They will be able to maintain continuous contact with one another that would ideally help to bring some past members back to the church.
- For those youth who fall on the younger side of the spectrum (13-18) they can be apart of a youth committee that would consist of both the younger and older youth in which they would make decisions for their fellow youth including planning things such as activities throughout the year that they would like to be involved in as well as their annual trip. These youth could also help in the planning of the youth anniversary day.
- A discipleship program should be formed and developed for the youth.
- A mentoring program should be formed and developed in which close mentor like relationships would be formed with volunteering older members of the church.
- A few spiritually inclined adults and some elders, deacons, deaconess in the church should be identified. There should be a paring up of the youth/young adult forming prayer teams. They should then encourage them to pray for each other and for others.
- A program like “career day” in which the youth are empowered and motivated as they listen to various professionals discuss their careers, would be extremely useful. The youth that are interested in specific fields would be able to ask questions, make connections and learn more about the different careers.
- There should be a scholarship program plus dinner for college bound students. The dinner should bring together those that are in college and those that are college-bound to share their experiences and what to look

for or expect in college as well as how to continue their spiritual growth in their new environments.

- There should be an Internet chat line formed for our youth to continue contact with one another.
- Publishing youth's work in a periodic newsletter may encourage them to participate more in their spiritual and social outlets.

Social Activities

- Roughly twice a year, there should be a singles night for social gathering with a blend of spiritual activities.
- Establish events such a shared dinner/game night to get everyone involved, which allows youth to build strong affiliation to the church and encourages them to invite their friends from outside.

General Suggestions

The key is raising awareness. Getting the youth interested would pave the way for getting them involved. Many youths have the impression that the church is and would always be run by the adults and older adults. They may feel that they are not needed. The church should be more vocal in recruiting the youth for church activities and responsibilities.

- a. Accentuate the need for the youth's services during youth related activities
- b. Encourage talents that have been showcased. For example singers, musical instrument players, poets, artists, should all be given opportunities to display their talents.
- c. Follow up with recent college graduates and college students to let them know that their presence and skills are much needed. Target those

youth with special skills so that they are used in aspects of the church where their skills would be of great use.

- d. In general, suggestions for youth activities should be in consensus with the interests of the age group involved.
- e. Youths from other churches should be invited to the youth activities and our youth should participate in other church's youth related activities.
- f. The youth seminar/conference should be held often to get feedback.

SECTION V (The Follow Up)

Establishing a follow-up group

A follow-up group is a group that will ask questions about how the program is going in their area or youth group. This group will follow-up on how a newly established procedure is going, and will provide a base on how to make to improve it.

Effort to follow up relationships with older church members

- It is important to make an effort to work on relationships with the older people as they have more experiences and different knowledge than the youth.
- Also it encourages unity in the church
- Ways in which to do this can be visiting them, or having coffee and so just spending time with them

Communication

- Get general details of youth who come along to church, so that it can be used in follow up. E-mail, Text, general catch-up with people
- Emails to let people know of up-coming events
- Visiting people in community and older members of the church

SECTION VI (EVALUATION OF YOUTH PROGRAMS)

- Implement quarterly survey and analyze result.
- Church leaders to visit the Youth group regularly. Implement something like a town-hall meeting. One can easily determine if the program is working or not.
- Elect a Youth Pastor who will give updates each time the church officers meet.

Youth Event Analysis

Form a committee that will evaluate any church event to determine the presence and participation of youth in the event. The members of this committee would include a youth, a young adult and an older adult. Their duties would be to determine if enough youth and young adults are infused into a particular event by:

- Determining if the role the youth played in the event were adequate
- Quickly identifying any problems, inadequacy or ineffectiveness
- Providing feedback to the event organizers
- Making recommendations for future events that will ensure adequate youth and young adult involvement in such event.

THE RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM WILL BE EVALUATED BASED ON ITS ABILITY TO INCORPORATE AND EXECUTE THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES.

Biblical Relationship

To provide the opportunities for youth to enjoy the company of and relate to members of the body of Christ of all ages in a Biblical correct and beneficial manner which brings glory to God and edification to the body of Christ. “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.” I Timothy 5:1-2.

Discipleship

To teach and inspire the youth to strengthen their personal relationship with the lord through worship, prayer, Bible study, and life of devotion while helping them apply the truth of God’s word to the unique challenges of adolescence “that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Col. 1:9b – 10).

Helping Others

To provide both the opportunity and the vision for the youth to begin a life of service to both the local church and the community in which we live. “But whosoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all” (Mark 10:43b-44).

Moral Purity

It is imperative that we remind the youth of Biblical mandates of abstaining from the sinful practices of this world. Flee the lust of youth; and pursue a holy life that is well pleasing to the Lord. “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (II Timothy 2:22).

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